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PARALLELS TO CALVINISM IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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(An Abstract)

Some of the most interesting aspects of William Faulkner's work are the parallels to Calvinism which are revealed in Faulkner's view of man and in his treatment of the problem of evil. This thesis traces parallels to Calvinistic doctrine in the following novels: The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, Absalom! Absalom! Light in August, A Fable, Intruder in the Dust, The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion, Requiem for a Nun, The Wild Palms and Go Down Moses. The analysis of Calvinism utilizes the Five Points of Calvinism as Adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1619: (1) Unconditional predestination, (2) Limited atonement, (3) Human inability (depravity), (4) Irresistibility of grace, and (5) the perseverance of the saints, as these points are defined in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.

Analysis of the novels indicates that Faulkner's works show several parallels to Calvinism in the doctrine of the depravity of man, predestination, and the perseverance of the saints. In terms of great polarities parallel to those of Calvinism, Faulkner discusses the issue of man's nature, his guilt and glory, his will, bound, yet free, and his fate, predestined, yet his freely to command. There does not seem, however, to be any clear indication of an atonement in Faulkner's

novels. Although some characters demonstrate characteristics of Christian sainthood, and express a simple, orthodox faith, Faulkner makes these characters aesthetically attractive to the reader without suggesting necessarily that their faith is Faulkner's proposed solution to the human dilemma. Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech and other public statements also indicate a somewhat ambiguous relationship between his professed humanism and the parallels to Calvinism which occur in his work. But it is not within Faulkner's humanistic philosophy but within the dramatic polarities parallel to those of Calvinism that the strength of Faulkner's novels lies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner has increasingly assumed an important position in American literature. Controversial the man and the work have been and still are, yet it is apparent that Faulkner is not merely a master of the sensational, but is a significant prose artist and a serious critic of the age.

One of the most interesting aspects of Faulkner's work is the fact that in many essentials he appears to have overleaped a century and the whole naturalistic movement of which he was once thought to have been a part and, in his preoccupation with the problem of evil, to have become a part of the Calvinistic tradition which helped to shape the works of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Robert Spiller has suggested that the powerful portrayal of Calvinism climaxed in the sermons and writings of Jonathan Edwards has lived on in American literature, and is "the structure of tragic realization which was repeated in the work of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, O'Neill, Eliot and Faulkner."[1]

It is the purpose of this thesis to trace through analysis of Faulkner's novels parallels to Calvinistic doctrine in the following of Faulkner's major works: The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary,

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[1]Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 12.

Absalom! Absalom!, Light in August, A Fable, Intruder in the Dust, The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion, Requiem for a Nun, The Wild Palms, and Go Down Moses.

Such a study presents a problem in definition of terms. Since the first publication of Institutes of the Christian Religion, Calvinism has undergone widely varying developments sometimes difficult to define and to describe; yet, in spite of such difficulties in definition, the term Calvinism is still a useful one. Randall Stewart comments of Calvinism in America:

> There were Calvinists (more or less complete) before /Jonathan/ Edwards, and there have been many since. Calvin's "Five Points" have a certain relevancy to the human condition at any time, and this relevancy is rediscovered from age to age.[2]

The Five Points of Calvinism, officially adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1619, are cited by John McNeill as follows: (1) Unconditional predestination, (2) Limited atonement, (3) Human inability (depravity), (4) Irresistibility of grace, and (5) the perseverance of the saints.[3] This study of Faulkner's novels is designed to examine the novels for parallels to these five doctrines as defined in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.[4]

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[2]Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1958), pp. 11, 12.

[3]John McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 265.

[4]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), 2 vols.

The limitation of the discussion of Calvinism to these five points was designed to avoid many complexities raised by the historical development of Calvinism, and to produce a broad basis for the study of the works of a novelist whose doctrinal parallels to Calvinism, if present, may be expected to be less specific than those of the historian or theologian would be.

CHAPTER II

HUMAN INABILITY

Calvin's doctrine of the depravity of man has long been a focal point of objections of many theologians and laymen, but the objections to Calvin's view have been scarcely more violent than the reactions of some literary critics to Faulkner's portrait of humanity and the doctrine of determination which has seemed to accompany it. A comparison of the two views seems to offer some interesting parallels which may provide further insight into Faulkner's work.

Calvin taught that man had been created perfect and in the image of his God.[1] He also taught that understanding of the present state of man must be based upon comprehension of the perfection that had been both in and around man in that lost Eden of innocence.[2] Much has been written and said about Calvin's "hard" doctrines concerning man, much of it with little recognition of Calvin's contention that true knowledge of man's nature was twofold: knowledge of the perfection in which he was created, and, secondly, knowledge of his depravity after the fall.[3] The intensity of the objections to Calvin's view of man's present status as utterly without merit before God has obscured the essential duality

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[1]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 159-160.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

actually inherent in the doctrine and has eclipsed the high point from which Calvin began his study of man.

Man was, in the beginning, a glorious creature, the very image of his God, possessed of all noble endowments of intelligence, prudence, judgment, choice and will, able to discern good from evil, reason going constantly before him with her lamp.[4] Man was (and is) the noblest work of God, the most admirable example of his justice, wisdom and goodness.[5] Man was the culmination of the creative action of God, formed only after heaven and earth were created and "adorned like a large and splendid mansion for his habitation."[6] Man was, both because of the beauty of his person and his many noble endowments, the most glorious specimen of all the works of God.[7] All that Calvin says about the depravity of man is said in reference to man's Golden Age and the memory of that lost garden where man once walked and talked with God. If man is depraved, it is with sin which is intelligible only in terms of this past glory; what man is becomes significant only in terms of what man once was.

Even Nature herself, according to Calvin, bears wounds, the mute reminder of man's lost glory.

> The natural course undoubtedly was, that the fabric of the world should be a school in which we might learn piety, and from it pass to eternal life and perfect felicity. But after looking at the perfection beheld wherever we turn our eye, above and below, we

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[4]Ibid., p. 169. [5]Ibid., pp. 159-160. [6]Ibid., p. 156.

[7]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 156.

> are met by the divine malediction, which while it involves innocent creatures in our fault, of necessity fills our own souls with despair.[8]

Man, whether he look within or without, finds then constant witness of this lost Eden; so powerful indeed was the stamp of this glorious past upon both man and nature that even the catastrophe of the fall could not erase it. God Himself in alienation from man remembers who man was: "How could God, who takes pleasure in the meanest of his works, be offended with the noblest of them all? The offense is not with the work itself, but the corruption of the work . . ."[9] And though all men, like Cain, bear the mark of that primeval tragedy, they bear also the image of their Creator:

> The swift and versatile movements of the soul in glancing from heaven to earth, connecting the future with the past, retaining the remembrance of former years, nay, forming creations of its own--its skill, moreover, in making astonishing discoveries, and inventing so many wonderful arts, are sure indications of the agency of God in man. What shall we say of its activity when the body is asleep, its many solid arguments, nay, its presentiments of things yet to come? What shall we say but that man bears about with him a stamp of immortality which can never be effaced?[10]

It is then in terms of the perfection of Eden that man's depravity assumes its true revelance for the Calvinist. The chaos of the fall records in direct proportion the perfection of creation as it came from the hand of God.

The depravity of the human race, Calvin taught, was then the result of Adam's choice, made in the full possession of reason, intelligence, prudence and judgment, and in complete freedom of will.[11] Adam

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[8] Ibid., p. 292. [9] Ibid., p. 220. [10] Ibid., p. 54. [11] Ibid., p.169.

was not a naive innocent offered an apple; he was representative man, the responsible head of the human race, endowed by his Creator with the highest gifts of intellect and reason, and placed in a flawless world which he was to rule and to enjoy. Adam was man in natural perfection in a naturally perfect world, but who, in complete freedom of will, chose to reject the sovereignty of his Creator. It was the will of man, not his senses, which was at issue in the primeval crisis, and Adam's failure in the trial of his obedience was rooted not in any inherent disability but in his pride which led to his fall.[12] Adam's choice was doubly tragic, for he not only involved all mankind in his fall, but did so at a time when by right use of the same faculty of will he might have secured for himself and his posterity eternal life.[13] As a result of his disobedience, Adam lost for all men not only Eden and innocence, but the gifts, the "ornaments with which he had been arrayed--vis. wisdom, virtue, justice, truth, and holiness, and by the substitution in their place of those dire pests, blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity, and unrighteousness" he "involved his posterity also, and plunged them in the same wretchedness."[14] "All of us, therefore, descending from an impure seed, come into the world tainted with the contagion of Sin."[15] And yet, Calvin taught that although it is through

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[12]Ibid., p. 213. [13]Ibid., p. 169. [14]Ibid., p. 214.

[15]Jean Calvin, Institute of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 214.

Adam's fall that man is involved in evil, it is, nonetheless, every man's guilt, each man's responsibility.

> For when it is said that the sin of Adam has made us obnoxious to the justice of God, the meaning is not, that we, who are in ourselves innocent and blameless, are bearing his guilt, but that since by his transgression we are all placed under the curse he is said to have brought us under obligation. Through him, however, not only has punishment been derived, but pollution instilled, for which punishment is justly due. Hence Augustine, although he often terms it another's sin (that he may more clearly show it comes to us by descent), at the same time asserts that it is each individual's own sin.[16]

Since it was the will of man which was tested in the command of God, it was the will which was terribly altered as a result of Adam's wrong choice. Calvinism has long been charged with making man an automaton in a malevolent universe; however, Calvin did not teach that the fall deprived man of will, but that it had left the will in such a corrupted condition that man is no longer able to choose rightly.

> Nevertheless, there remains a will which both inclines and hastens on with the strongest affection towards sin; man, when placed under this bondage, being deprived not of will, but of soundness of will. Bernard says, not improperly, that all of us have will; but to will ill is defect. Thus simply to will is the part of man, to will ill the part of corrupt nature, and to will well the part of grace.[17]

When every man stands guilty before God, it is not as the innocent sufferer for Adam's sin, but on the grounds of both inherited pollution

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[16]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 217.

[17]Ibid., p. 253. Calvin cites Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), church father and founder of the Cistercian Monastery of Clairvaux.

and his own wrong choices, the necessary result of his corrupted will. Sin, which, as a result of fallen nature, has become a necessity for every man, is not, at any time, a matter of compulsion. This distinction was a vital one to Calvin, and he noted that the depracity of man and the binding of the will by sin was intelligible only to those who made this fundamental distinction between necessity and compulsion:

> Moreover, when I say that the will, deprived of liberty, is led or dragged by necessity to evil, it is strange that any should deem the expression harsh, seeing there is no absurdity in it, and it is not at variance with pious use. It does, however, offend those who know not how to distinguish between necessity and compulsion.[18]

Calvin carefully summarized his own distinction between the two forces:

> Let this, then, be regarded as the sum of the distinction. Man, since he was corrupted by the fall, sins not forced or unwilling, but voluntarily, by a most forward bias of the mind; not by violent compulsion, or external force, but by the movement of his own passions; and yet such is the depravity of his nature, that he cannot move and act except in the direction of evil.[19]

In addition to the distinction between necessity and compulsion, it is also necessary to note that the depravity of man, for Calvin, lay not in what man did, but in what he was after the fall, the tragic flaw in the essential will of man, although the evil fruit of the corrupt nature was also termed sin.

> Original sin, then, may be defined as a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in scripture are termed works of the flesh. This corruption is repeatedly designated by Paul by the term sin (Gal. v:19); while the works which proceed from it such as adultery, fornication, theft, hatred, murder, revellings, he terms,

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 254.

> in the same way, the fruits of sin, though in various passages of Scripture, and even by Paul himself, they are also termed sins.[20]

It seemed apparent to Calvin that the fruits of sin, the inevitable evidence of estrangement, involved man in violence. He cites Bernard in this regard:

> Among animals, man alone is free, and yet, sin intervening, he suffers a kind of violence, but a violence preceeding from his will not from nature, so that it does not even deprive him of innate liberty.[21]

But it also seemed apparent to Calvin that this violence preceeding from the corrupt will of man was not always evident in every man to the same extent. This restraint he attributed not to any good in man, but to the direct intervention of God:

> But we ought to consider that, notwithstanding of the corruption of our nature, there is some room for divine grace, such grace as, without purifying it, may lay it under internal restraint. For did the Lord let every mind loose to wanton in its lusts, doubtless there is not a man who would not show that his nature is capable of all the crimes with which Paul charges it . . . . What? Can you exempt yourself from the number of those whose feet are swift to shed blood; whose hands are foul with rapine and murder; whose throats are like open sepulchres; whose tongues are deceitful; whose lips are venomous; whose actions are useless, unjust, rotten, deadly; whose soul is without God; whose inward parts are full of wickedness; whose eyes are on the watch for deception; whose minds are prepared for insult; whose every part, in short, is framed for endless deeds of wickedness?[22]

The doctrine of the depravity of man asserted no mere failure on the part of man to observe a prescribed decalogue of conduct; it was the stern acknowledgement that man, created in the image of God, had by

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[20] Ibid., p. 217. [21] Ibid., p. 254. [22] Ibid., pp. 251-252.

deliberate choice of disobedience so fundamentally altered his nature that the entire family of mankind is likewise changed, and by this alteration forever incapacitated in their own strength to seek God.

Calvinism asserted this truth concerning the nature of man in terms of great polarities. All men are irrevocably bound to the past in its glory and defeat; yet man is bound into this past in such a manner that it is not past but present and future, since Eden held all present and all future for all mankind. So great was Eden's glory that man bears forever in himself the stamp of the royal image which cannot be effaced;[23] yet so catastrophic was Eden's defeat that man bears forever this image, "vitiated and almost destroyed, nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated and tainted with impurity."[24] Suffering Nature reminds man of both that lost Eden and his royal origin.[25] Man is himself a living paradox of free slavery, his will both a slave to sin, and his freely to command.[26] Man finds himself with intellect which "however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator,"[27] yet with a will "enchained as the slave of sin . . . " (unable to) "make a movement towards goodness, far less steadily pursue it."[28] It is in terms of the tensions erected by the great polarities inherent in the

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[23]Ibid., p. 54. [24]Ibid., p. 165. [25]Ibid., p. 214.

[26]Ibid., p. 223. [27]Ibid., p. 236.

[28]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, p. 253.

Calvinistic doctrine of the depravity of man that striking parallels can be found in Faulkner's works.

General recognition of the depravity of Faulkner's characters has long been a pastime of Faulkner's critics. Mary Cooper Robb points out a number of critics who have noted with varying degrees of asperity or sympathy Faulkner's list of damned men.[29] Joseph Warren Beach, for example, views Faulkner's characters as "invariably deviations from the norm,"[30] and Alfred Kazin feels that Faulkner always tells the same story: "damnation leading to mysterious abject submission, leading to perdition."[31] And it is not difficult to assemble an imposing list of characters who are marked by a taint similar to Calvin's doctrine of original sin.

In The Sound and the Fury, for example, there is old Ikkemotubbe, ruthless, cruel, who betrayed his people and sold his son into slavery; there are the Compsons, whose family had known a brief glory, but whose individual members in The Sound and the Fury read like a roster of defeated humanity: Jason II, who drank himself to death; Quentin III, who committed suicide; Cady, pregnant with another man's child when she married; Benjy, the idiot brother; Jason III, who blackmailed his sister and stole the money sent for his niece's support; Quentin IV, Caddy's

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[29]Mary Cooper Robb, William Faulkner: An Estimate of His Contribution to the Modern American Novel (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1957), p. 7.

[30]Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction, 1920-1940 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 148.

[31]Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941), p. 460.

child, who robbed her uncle and ran away with the pitchman from a traveling show who was already under sentence for bigamy. As I Lay Dying adds to the list; Addie Bundren, with a past marked by adultery; Anse Bundren, selfish, cruel, lazy, hypocritical; Dewey Dell, seventeen and unwed, seeking means for an abortion; Cora Tull, a mockery of religion with her pie and prayer-meeting righteousness; and Whitfield, the minister who fathered one of Addie's children. In Light in August there is Joe Christmas, the tortured mulatto murderer; McEachern, the sadistic Presbyterian foster father; Joanna Burden, the psychotic spinster; Lucas Burch, the braggart, the betrayer; Hightower, the minister, who drove his wife to suicide and his congregation to locking him out of the church.

Such a listing, however, leads to a superficial treatment of Faulkner's work, or to broad generalizations which are at best misleading. Faulkner's characters are not all "mechanically damned"; there is Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury; Lena Grove in Light in August; also Abbie Bundren in As I Lay Dying, who, Faulkner infers, has achieved some type of victory in death, and others whose lives, though involved in violence, do not leave the reader with the sense of mechanical damnation. Nor do all Faulkner's characters leave the reader with the sense that, as Beach charges, "human behavior is too inveterately tragic and fateful to be corrected."[32] Even Hightower, pathetic and inadequate as he may be, demonstrates at the death of Joe Christmas that he has experienced a

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[32]Beach, op. cit., p. 123.

powerful though bitter corrective to his behavior. Little is gained then by merely listing the "depraved" characters which people Faulkner's novels, nor does such a listing show the significant parallel to Calvinism in the novels. Drieser, Hemingway, Anderson, Caldwell, Steinbeck--these men too have documented the evidence of humanity in defeat; yet it is not with these men that Faulkner shares his closest kinship. Quentin Compson has more in common with Arthur Dimmesdale than with Clyde Griffiths, Robert Jordon, Tom Joad or Jeeter Lester. Robert Spiller calls Faulkner's sage of the South an epic of the fall and corruption of man,[33] and it is the polarities by which Faulkner expresses his view of man which demonstrate most strongly the similarity to Calvinism which is found in Faulkner's work.

One of these polarities lies in Faulkner's treatment of time. Man exists in Faulkner's work in terms of his past, a past, which like the Eden of the Calvinist, is one of both glory and defeat, and which is not even past since it determines the present and future. The past is so inextricably mixed with the present and the future for Faulkner's characters that the unwary reader venturing for the first time into the complicated maze of the Yoknapatawpha County world is annoyed and often completely disorientated by the abrupt vanishing of chronological time. The whole of Faulkner's mythological kingdom, as Malcolm Cowley has called it, is one vast symbol of man's eternal involvment with the past.

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[33]Robert Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 300.

The past is not even past, Gavin Stephens says, and many of the most significant problems of major characters in Faulkner's novels are, as will be pointed out in detail later, like Quentin in their desperate search for some answer which deals with this past which will not stay past, and which provides endlessly a glory which cannot be forgotten and a guilt which cannot be escaped.

Since George Marion O'Donnell first pointed out the tension between the Traditional Past and the Amoral Present which exists in Faulkner's work, there has been some tendency to identify the past in Faulkner's novels too closely with the antebellum days of Southern glory, and to give the past a romantic glow that has not been given by Faulkner.

In the first place, Faulkner indicates that when man entered the new world even then his hands were already red with blood. "Dispossessed" hangs both over the household of Compsons and over Ikkemotubbe in Faulkner's preface to The Sound and the Fury, and is certainly more than an expression of loss of social status. In Go Down Moses, Ike McCaslin points out that man's history had been a series of dispossessions--Eden, Canaan, finally the Old World. When God, in pity, watching man "as he snarled in what you call the old world's worthless twilight over the old world's gnawed bones," provided man with a new world, man, coming "from that old world's corrupt and worthless twilight" brought with him corruption as "though in the sailfuls of the old world's tainted wind which drove the ships."[34] Man's history of rapine and pillage of the

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[34]William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1940), p. 259.

earth and of his fellowmen reaches back to an Eden for both Faulkner and Calvin, and although the past does represent to Faulkner some qualities of good which are not easily found in the present, it is a far too simple view of Faulkner's doctrine of man to represent man in any immediate past as anything other than "tainted" by something parallel to Original Sin.

In the second place, Faulkner's characters certainly show an awareness that antebellum glory was no period of innocence; the relationships between men in this time also bear the marks of violence proceeding from the corrupted will of man. One of the most moving passages in Faulkner's work comes in Go Down Moses when the boy, reading the old ledgers, discovers the real legacy that old Carothers McCaslin has left him--responsibility for the son McCaslin had brutally sired on his own half-Negro daughter.[35] If Carothers McCaslin, General Compson, Colonel Satoris, and others who so vividly people the past have about them a glory (which to Faulkner they certain have), it is a glory not of innocence nor of eminence but of men who, marred by sins of violence, bear in spite of this the "image of immortality which cannot be effaced."[36]

In this regard it is well to note that Faulkner, like Calvin, did not limit human depravity to the white man. Ikkomotubbe, the great Chichasaw chief from which Jason Compson won the Compson Mile by means of a mare "which could do the first two furlongs in definitely under the

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[35] Ibid., p. 272.

[36] Calvin, op. cit., p. 54.

halfminute and the next two in not appreciably more," is a good example of this.[37] Ikkemotubbe was called "l'homme" and sometimes "de l'homme" by his foster brother, a Chevalier of France; Ikkemotubbe, who was "a man of wit and imagination as well as a shrewd judge of character, including his own, carried it one step farther and anglicised it to Doom."[38] When all the facts are assembled, Ikkemotubbe emerges as no doomed and noble savage, helpless before the clever encroachment of the white man. He is, instead, a shrewd and ruthless Jacob, who, having been a youthful run-away to New Orleans, returned to his people with a dissolute French companion, a Quadroon slave woman, a gold laced hat and coat, a wicker basket of month-old puppies, and a snuff-box filled with poison.[39] He then poisoned the puppies in full view of the people, poisoned the eight-year-old son of the cousin who was the legal heir to the Chickasaw throne, and, on the same day, when the cousin had hurriedly abdicated and Ikkemotubbe had become king, he married the quadroon, already pregnant with his child, to one of the slave men he had inherited, and two years later "sold the man and woman and the child who was his own son to his white neighbor, Carothers McCaslin."[40] It may be argued that the evil which Ikkemotubbe found in New Orleans was the unique import of the white man, but there

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[37]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 6.

[38]Ibid., p. 3.

[39]William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1940), p. 166.

[40]Ibid.

is no indication that the Indian Chief was anything but an avid student with a will which sinned, as Calvin phrased it, "not forced or unwilling, but voluntarily, by a most forward bias of the mind."[41] Faulkner does not permit Ikkemotubbe to plead ignorance even in the matter of his bets placed on the Compson mare. Faulkner states that Ikkemotubbe knew better than to suppose that the wilderness was his to sell, but was ruthless enough to pretend that it was his to convey.[12]

Sam Fathers, Ikkemotubbe's son, is one of Faulkner's most sympathetic characters but he too shares the communal guilt. It is he who teaches the boy Ike McCaslin to hunt, who marks the boy's face with the warm blood of the buck and initiates him into the brotherhood of "good" hunters. If Faulkner has created any character who is good, just, in tune with the great primeval mother earth, it is Sam Fathers; yet when Ike urges his cousin to free Sam, the cousin soberly points out, "His cage ain't McCaslins," and his betrayal nothing so simple as having been sold into slavery by his father Doom.[43] Both Sam and his father Doom had been betrayed by Sam's mother, the quadroon, Faulkner says, not willfully, yet betrayed by her all the same. Since Faulkner is commonly held to view slavery as the curse which corrupted mankind, it is worth noting that Ikkemotubbe was not dragged to New Orleans at the end of a white man's rope; he went willfully. He, as that other Adam, was perhaps

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[41]Calvin, op. cit., p. 254.

[42]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 191.

[43]Ibid., p. 168.

fatally curious, but the doom of his people was the result of his deliberate choice. If Ikkemotubbe was betrayed, it was not by the black blood of the quadroon woman, but by himself. If his Eve, like the other Eve, was already tainted and so betrayed him, Ikkemotubbe, unlike that other Adam, had a choice as to whom his Eve was to be. It is always a temptation to read too much into Faulkner, and this may well be a case in point, but the parallels here to the story of the depravity of man become so striking that it may be worth while to point them out. Ikkemotubbe inhabited an Eden, the wilderness of his people yet untouched by the white man; he rejected tribal controls, and as a result of his willful effort to become king he became the Doom of his people, the royal blood of warriors and kings forever tainted. His bequest to his son was not kingship but slavery; Sam inherited "not only the blood of slaves but even a little of the very blood which had enslaved it" so that forever he found "himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat."[44] When the child Ike urges that the McCaslin cousin set Sam free, McCaslin attempts to explain that he cannot; that the thing which the boy notices at times in the eyes of old Sam Fathers is "not the mark of servitude but of bondage, the knowledge that for a while that part of his blood had been the blood of slaves,"[45] his awareness that "the blood of the warriors and chiefs had been

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 167.

betrayed."[46] "His cage ain't us," McCaslin said, although this did not absolve McCaslin's guilt.[47]

The parallel to Calvin's thought is vivid here. Calvin felt that the tragedy which stalks every man is not his servitude to sin, bitter as that may be; it is instead the haunting knowledge that his royal blood has been betrayed, that every man has as his legacy not only the tainted blood, the blood of the slaves of sin, but also a little of the very blood which enslaved it, and so becomes "his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat."[48]

At the danger of pressing the point too far, it is worth noting that Ikkemotubbe, like that other Adam, lost Eden for all his people. They were dispossessed, Faulkner notes in The Sound and the Fury, made wanderers to "the wild western land presently to be called Oklahoma," where "one day the homeless descendants of the dispossessed would ride supine with drink and splendidly comatose above the dusty allotted harbarage of their bones in specially built scarlet painted hearses and fire-engines."[49] This is far, indeed, from "the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness," where the boy "lay in wait for the buck at dawn and killed it when it walked back to the bed as Sam had

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[46] Ibid., p. 168.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 4.

told him how the old Chickasaw fathers did."[50]

The intricate relationships of families in Faulkner's novels consistently illustrate man's involvement with the past and his inevitable participation in its guilt. Calvin noted especially the effects of guilt passing from father to son:

> We must therefore understand it to mean, that a curse from the Lord righteously falls not only on the head of the guilty individual but also on all his lineage. When it has fallen, what can be anticipated but that the father, being deprived of the Spirit of God, will live most flagitiously; that the son being in like manner forsaken of the Lord, because of his father's iniquity, will follow the same road to destruction; and be followed in his turn by succeeding generations, forming a seed of evil-doers?[51]

The family relationships between the Compsons, the Sutpens, the Edmondses follow this pattern; Faulkner's summary of the history of the Compson household in the preface to The Sound and the Fury might well be used to illustrate Calvin's point. The long parade of Compsons from the old Culloden and Carolina and Kentucky grandfathers (dispossessed, as Faulkner notes) to Jason IV and his "brazenhaired" mistress is an account of the dissolution of a household in which son follows father in succeeding generations of evil-doers until when Dilsey says, "I've seen the first and the last," the reader is prepared to accept Dilsey's view as his own.[52]

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[50]Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1940), pp. 208, 210.

[51]Calvin, op. cit., p. 332.

[52]Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 313.

The families in their involvements are not marked by guilt alone, however. Quentin Compson was the bitter prophet and judge of both the family's honor and doom, its pride and disgrace. Roth Edmonds, in Go Down Moses, shares his family's glory. Although he is not so good a man as had been old Zack Edmonds and old Cass Edmonds before him, back in the time when men were men,[53] he partakes of more than the "almost choleric shortness of temper which Lucas remembered in old Cass Edmonds"; his is the face, "acquiline, saturnine, a little ruthless, the face of his ancestor too."[54] It is Roth who holds the estate together; and with the same indomitable will of his ancestors makes it pay in the face of tremendous odds. He lovingly, if sullenly, takes candy to Aunt Mollie, the only mother he has known, stopping once a month outside the Negro hut. Yet, sharing the Edmonds' name and glory, he shares their guilt. He takes part in the depletion of nature; he shoots a doe, and with a shotgun. Ike asks: "Since when did you start having trouble getting meat with your rifle?"[55] Roth perpetuates the tainted blood; his first born son is the child of the girl whose grandfather was the slave Tennie's son, Jim.

Family relationship of guilt and glory are such an essential part of Faulkner's novels that the significance of any given action

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[53] Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1940), pp. 37, 45.

[54] Ibid., p. 59.

[55] Ibid., p. 355.

rests upon the family relationships involved. The Compsons, the McCaslins, the Edmondses, the Sutpens, the Beauchamps, are all so interrelated that it is difficult to understand any character outside a basic comprehension of the whole intricate Yoknapatawpha County community. It is not possible to assess fully the complexity of Quentin Compson's concern with guilt and his subsequent suicide without both The Sound and the Fury, and Absalom! Absalom! Both books can certainly be read as independent units, yet either of them taken alone leaves the reader with only one layer of the story.

Intruder in the Dust is another dramatic illustration of these complicated family relationships so continuous that they make of Faulkner's entire literary output an organic whole also. The casual reader who approaches Intruder in the Dust as a detective story will find much that is obscure if not incomprehensible, and an emotional intensity which may be unaccountable if not distasteful, if this is his first trip to Yoknapatawpha County or his first acquaintance with the Beauchamps. To such a reader Chuck Mallison's problem and the attempt of Gavin Stephens to help him deal with it may be a racial polemic imposed none too successfully upon the story. But such an assumption is to misunderstand the complicated family relationships and the tangled legacy of guilt and honor that Faulkner has constructed through the Yoknapatawpha County myth.

Since the pioneering work of Warren Beck who pointed out the "deliberately withheld meaning" of Faulkner's style, [56] considerable

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[56] Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, editors (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), pp. 101-118.

attention has been given to the technique by which Faulkner achieves this, but little attention has been given to the fact that the deliberately withheld meaning is itself an organic part of the whole of Faulkner's work, that the very method of telling the story becomes evidence of the total involvement of all mankind with each other. Faulkner not only asserts through the complexity of his family relationships the eternal impossibility of separating one man's guilt from another's, but he also, through his choice of technique, leads the reader to experience this. Guilt as Faulkner portrays it is not fully comprehensible except through the readers' total involvement in the Yoknapatawpha County saga.

These family relationships, however, extend beyond the limits of actual blood relationships, and reinforce Faulkner's presentation of the universal depravity of man. A vivid illustration of this occurs in Absalom! Absalom! when Quentin tries to explain the story of Thomas Sutpen to his Canadian roommate, Shreve. When the story is finished and the two boys lie shivering in the cold New England dark, Shreve attempts to make some meaningful summary of the story:

> "So it was the aunt Rosa that came back to town inside the ambulance," Shreve said. Quentin did not answer; he did not even say Miss Rosa.[57]

Quentin gives up. It is not possible to explain to Shreve that Miss Rosa, not Aunt Rosa is involved. Quentin is, of course, correct; Rosa Coldfield is not his aunt. But Shreve is also more correct than Quentin

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[57]William Faulkner, Absalom! Absalom! (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1951), p. 376.

knew, having in Quentin's frantic telling of the story absorbed not the factual relationship of Rosa Coldfield to the Compson family, but the emotional relationship to Rosa Coldfield which Quentin felt but could not bear to perceive. The two boys lie quietly in the dark, Quentin remembering the scent of cigar smoke and wisteria which had come with his father's last letter.

> "The South," Shreve said. "The South. Jesus. No wonder you folks all outlive yourselves by years and years and years." . . . "I am older at twenty than a lot of people who have died," Quentin said.[58]

Shreve then remarks:

> "Now I want you to tell me just one thing more. Why do you hate the South?"
> "I don't hate it," Quentin said, quickly. . . . I don't hate it, he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I dont! I dont! I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it![59]

Guilt in Faulkner's work involves the family of humankind. Quentin feels this. He is a part of a South, not just the Compson family, and although he wishes desperately to rid himself of the burden, he shares forever the guilt and defeat. To reject this is to reject himself.

Dilsey reinforces this concept of the universality of human involvement in guilt. In that last dark Easter morning when Dilsey appears on the scene the reader has been prepared for her view of the dissolution of the Compson household. When Jason discovers the broken window and charges Luster with having broken it, Luster reports

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[58] Ibid., p. 377.

[59] Ibid., p. 378.

indignantly to Dilsey that he hadn't, and, observing Jason's rage, adds, "Dese is funny folks. Glad I aint none of em." Dilsey's retort is sharply to the point: "Aint none of who?" Dilsey said. "Lemme tell you somethin, nigger boy, you got jes es much Compson devilment in you es any of em. Is you right sho you never broke dat window?"[60] It is significant that Dilsey, who alone of the characters in The Sound and the Fury has achieved peace, identifies with the household not in terms of their glory, fancied or real, but in terms of their guilt which she clearly perceives.

Faulkner's portrayal of human depravity not only parallels that of Calvin in the matter of the past with its paradoxical tensions of both inherent guilt and glory, but also parallels Calvinistic thought in his treatment of human will.

Calvin taught that the fall deprived man not of will, but of soundness of will, so that to will was the hallmark of humanity, but to will ill the perpetual emblem of their guilt. The fall in no way lessened man's responsibility to choose rightly, but fatally incapacitated his ability to do so. Calvin states:

> As man, by sinning forfeited the privileges conferred on him at his creation, recourse must be had to Christ. . . . Here the subject of original sin is considered, and it is shown that man has no means within himself by which he can escape from guilt and the impending curse: That, on the contrary, until he is reconciled and renewed, everything that proceeds from him is of the nature of sin. . . . Man being thus utterly undone in himself, and incapable of working out his own cure by thinking a good thought,

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[60]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 292.

> or doing what is acceptable to God, must seek redemption without himself--viz. in Christ.[61]

Man is confronted with the responsibility to choose rightly precisely as though this power were his to command. Quentin Compson becomes Faulkner's tragic dramatization of the paradox of the free slavery of will; it may perhaps be said of Quentin as of Hamlet, his is the tragedy of a man who would not make up his mind, of a man who rejected the responsibility of choice.

Quentin seems particularly conscious that he is part of that family involvement in both guilt and glory which makes time forever relative, and is conscious that he participates in these things by birth. He attempts to explain to Shreve, who asks:

> "What is it? something you live and breathe in like air? a kind of vacuum filled with wraith-like and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago? a kind of entailed birthright father and son of never forgiving General Sherman, so forevermore as long as your children's children produce children you wont be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge at Manassas?"
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> "Gettysburg," Quentin said. "You cant understand it. You would have to be born there."[62]

Quentin shares Miss Rosa's explanation of the war:

> It's because she wants it told, so that people whom she will never see and whose names she will never hear and who have never heard her name nor seen her face will read it and know at last why God let us lose the War: that only through the blood of our

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[61] Calvin, op. cit., p. 28.

[62] William Faulkner, Absalom! Absalom! (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1951), p. 362.

men and the tears of our women could He stay this demon and efface his name and lineage from the earth.[63]

The essential problem which faces Quentin is one of acceptance of the guilt of the past which is forced upon him, and atonement for its guilt. Time, as a result, becomes of paramount importance to him; his effort is directed at escaping time which imposes upon him both the heritage of guilt and this necessity of choice. Quentin chooses not to choose and his failure to choose becomes itself a wrong choice, the failure of the perverted will no longer able to will well.

The watch which becomes Quentin's symbol of this struggle with time, was the gift of his father who had solved the problem of the past and its guilt by simply asserting, "No battle is ever won . . . they are not even fought."[64] "Christ was not crucified," the father explains, "he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels."[65] "Time is your misfortune," he once told Quentin,[66] and "victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools."[67]

Quentin, however, cannot accept the estimate of his father; good and evil are not illusions to him. There is with him constantly the memory of Caddy, of the incest uncommitted, yet passionately desired, not for the possession of his sister's already promiscuous body, but for "some presbyterian concept of its eternal punishment: he, not God,

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[63] Ibid., p. 11.

[64] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 95.

[65] Ibid., p. 96. [66] Ibid., p. 123. [67] Ibid., p. 95.

could by that means cast himself and his sister both into hell . . . ."[68] Quentin longs for the willful choice of incest, since the act of sin makes him able in effect to determine his fate. "The true Calvinist seeks conviction of sin as preparation for a promised salvation," Spiller remarks,[69] and some of the tragic intensity of the incest theme lies in the fact that if Quentin can sin then he can also possibly be saved. Yet even in this seeking of guilt Quentin's fatal flaw of pride reveals itself; he, not God, could through this guilt determine his fate. Time becomes then a two-edged sword to Quentin. It is the sharp reminder of both his inherent guilt, and of the guilt resulting from his rejection of the responsibility of choice.

Quentin's section of The Sound and the Fury opens with this struggle with time and suggests his failure to choose. He rises and turns the watch face down upon the dresser, but the external world imposes time upon him in spite of all that he can do when the tell-tale shadow of the sash marks the hour. He remembers his father's cryptic rejection of time as the mausoleum of all hope and dispair; he thinks for a moment of his own concern with time, then remembers Caddy's wedding, the interview with his father ("I have committed incest Father I said"),[70] and the family's insistence that he go to Harvard, when he personally wished Jason to have had the year.[71] As Quentin's thoughts move to

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[68] Ibid., p. 9.

[69] Spiller, op. cit., p. 82.

[70] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 98.

[71] Ibid., p. 96.

the interview with his father, his thoughts betray his failure to choose.

Although the reader does not learn the full details until later, Caddy's wedding had been a defeat of will. Caddy would not attempt to avoid the wedding though Quentin had begged her to do so, yet Quentin himself was at the time in clear possession of facts about his sister's fiance which revealed him to be a cheat, a blackguard, and a rascal, but had done nothing.[72] He had not wanted to come to Harvard, yet he had done nothing to force the family to send Jason in his place, or to use the money for Caddy whose marriage he so bitterly opposed. Even the state of virginity in Quentin represented ironically not a choice, a positive separation to innocence, but the failure to seek even the act of sin.

> Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it. Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody there but her and me. If we could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us. I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames.[73]

It is the condemnation for which Quentin longs which will remove him from the world of time and the necessity for choice. Walton Litz has pointed out that Quentin uses the notion of predestination as an excuse for ignoring the self-disciplinary requirements of the philosophy,[74] and this is precisely the point here. Quentin's desire is not for strength

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[72] Ibid., p. 142. [73] Ibid., p. 98.

[74] Walton Litz, "William Faulkner's Moral Vision," Southwest Review, 37:200-209, Summer, 1952.

to finish things, but for disassociation from them--if things just finished themselves. In this he is like his father who has completely withdrawn from any active effort to deal with either the past or present; the father sits and writes in his dusty office, surrounded by his dog-eared copies of Horace, Ovid, and Catullus. Whatever counsel he gives Quentin involves reduction of good and evil to mere words:

> Its nature is hurting you not Caddy and I said That's just words and he said So is virginity and I said you dont know. You cant know and he said Yes. On the instant when we come to realize that tragedy is second-hand.[75]

Man is "the sum of what have you . . . stalemate of dust and desire" and even Quentin's problem of incest is unimportant.[76] Nothing is worth the changing of it, because tomorrow you can't even remember what was dreadful today.[77] Quentin takes his father's withdrawal to the logical conclusion: if nothing matters, if no choice is relevant, then life is itself irrelevant. He thinks:

> And I will look down and see my murmuring bones and the deep water like wind, like a roof of wind, and for a long time they cannot distinguish even bones upon the lonely and inviolate sand. Until on the Day when He says Rise only the flatiron would come floating up. It's not when you realize that nothing can help you--religion, pride, anything--it's when you realize that you dont need any aid.[78]

Real despair comes when the possibility of choice is removed, when the realization comes that you do not need help not because you are able, but because the inability itself no longer has significance. If there

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[75]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 135.

[76]Ibid., p. 143.

[77]Ibid., p. 99.

[78]Ibid.

is no condemnation, there is no salvation, and man himself is an ephemoral phenomenon--"on the Day when He says Rise only the flatiron would come floating up."[79]

Quentin cannot live with either his father's ethical nihilism or his own rejection of choice. He acts to destroy time:

> I went to the dresser and took up the watch, with the face still down. I tapped the crystal on the corner of the dresser and caught the fragments of glass in my hand and put them in the tray. The watch ticked on. I turned the face up, the blank dial with little wheels clicking and clicking behind it, not knowing any better. Jesus walking on Galilee and Washington not telling lies.[80]

Rabi, the French critic, comments:

> When Quentin breaks the watch, he secretly hopes to stop time, to flee the world of unbearable duties, to see refuge in the world of divinity, innocence and eternity. But the broken watch continues its ticking during Quentin's last walk. . . . Faulkner thus shows that man cannot escape, however much he might wish to. . . . The watch will continue, until the day of death, to eat away time, with its persistence ticking, and to remind man of his obligation to live, to struggle and to choose.[81]

But for Quentin the problem of time includes not only the necessity of choice but also the standard of choice. When the chimes ring, Quentin thinks, "Quarter to what? All right. Quarter to what?"[82] Quentin is aware that neither his father's books nor his own answer this question. He carefully stacks these books on the table before he goes

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[79] Ibid. [80] Ibid.

[81] Rabi, "Faulkner and the Exiled Generation," William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, editors (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), p. 130.

[82] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 189.

out to die. Yet Quentin is also aware that Dilsey, whose clock has only one hand, is always serenely confident of the accuracy of the time.[83] Quentin feels that life is tolerable only if man can bring himself into relationship to some objective standard, some ordering vision outside himself, but unlike Dilsey, he cannot achieve this. It is significant however, that Quentin himself views his failure to achieve this in terms not of an intellectual problem but of will. As he goes into the street from the jeweler's shop he thinks:

> There were about a dozen watches in the window, a dozen different hours and each with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that mine had, without any hands at all. Contradicting one another. I could hear mine, ticking away inside my pocket, even though nobody could see it, even though it could tell nothing if anyone could. And so I told myself to take that one.[84]

The symbolism brings Alexander Pope's couplet to mind: "Tis with our judgment as our watches, none/Goes just alike, yet each believes his own." This is only partially so for Quentin; he knows with Pope that none goes just alike, yet he refuses to believe his own, although he tells himself to choose. He thinks again of his father: "He said time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life."[85] Quentin knows he has not chosen and will not choose. He goes to buy the flat irons which will enable him to die, to place himself where he need never choose again. Even the very method of suicide betrays Quentin's fatal passivity; this is no violent Ahab swept under in the search for Moby Dick. Quentin merely

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[83] Ibid., p. 316. [84] Ibid., p. 104. [85] Ibid.

brushes his hat and cleans his teeth, then goes out to sink quietly beneath the motionless water, the flat irons in his pockets so that he will not rise again. The choice finally made is not a choice of death, but the negative one of no longer choosing to live.[86]

As Faulkner provides further insight into Quentin's life, it is through the record of Quentin's consistent failure to choose. Quentin not only has been unable to consumate an incestuous relationship with Caddy, but also has been unable to achieve a vital relationship with Natalie.[87] Just as he once wished himself in Eden, innocent, he wishes himself unsexed; it is not that he desires emasculation but that he wishes himself never to have been given reproductive capacity so that the responsibility of choice in use could have been forever foreign to him.[88] Caddy reminds him of his inability, "Poor Quentin," she says; "Youve never done that have you?"[89] Even in the matter of suicide Quentin had tried once and failed.[90]

Quentin's inability to choose is marked at times by his ambivalence. Just as Quentin rejected his father's ethical nihilism yet was attracted by it, Quentin also rejects the social code as a substitute for the objective ordering of behavior, while assimilating a part of it into himself. He despises Gerald Bland and his pretensions to social superiority; he is also aware of the unreality of the social

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[86] Ibid., pp. 188, 192. [87] Ibid., pp. 167-170. [88] Ibid., p. 135.
[89] Ibid., pp. 166-170. [90] Ibid., p. 171.

code's requirements.[91] Quentin perceives the superficiality of the family's gesture of educating him at Harvard, thinking: "Harvard is such a fine dead sound we will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound."[92] But Quentin clings, however, to parts of the social code. There is snobbery in his resentment of Herbert's failure to behave as a gentleman.[93] He remembers having slapped Caddy not because of the kiss but because she had permitted "some darn town squirt" to bestow it.[94] The family's honor tortures him. Yet not all Quentin's social heritage is snobbery; there is a courtesy in his relationship to Dilsey, to Louis, and to Deacon which makes Gerald's behavior with his servants grossly offensive.[95] There is a courtly tenderness toward the little Italian girl which betrays the lineage of the old governor.[96] And there is something both absurd and splendid in Quentin, his vest carefully cleaned of blood, his hat carefully brushed, going as a gentleman to die.

Quentin's awareness of his inability to choose climaxes his discussion with his father of the possibility of suicide. The father had refused to entertain seriously the proposal that Quentin would actually commit suicide any more than he would commit the incest which he confessed. In the face of Quentin's repetitious insistence upon his desire for incest and the resulting condemnation, the father had finally

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[91] Ibid., pp. 110, 126. [92] Ibid., p. 193. [93] Ibid., p. 142.
[94] Ibid., p. 152. [95] Ibid., pp. 105, 106, 118, 126, 133.
[96] Ibid., pp. 144, 145.

questioned bluntly, "Did you try to make her do it?" Quentin had then acknowledged, "I was afraid to i was afraid she might."[97] The father, however, by forcing Quentin to face his refusal to act destroys him. The father adds, "You cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this," and the irony lies in the degree to which the father is precisely right where he is most completely wrong.[98] It is true that Quentin cannot bear the passing of guilt but the father is completely wrong in the motivation he assigns to this. It is not, as the father thinks, Quentin's reluctance to leave his apotheosis and come down to the "real" world where "even the dispair or remorse or bereavement is not particularly important to the dark diceman," but it is, ironically, Quentin's frantic effort to cling to reality which can exist for him, unlike his father, only in terms of guilt.[99] John Arthos remarks of Quentin that:

> This straining for guilt places such a burden on his consciousness that he is unequal to it, and finally he kills himself. . . . He wants to believe in original sin, he wants to make himself into a symbol of it, and he finds himself unable to through some defect of insight and understanding. Accordingly, the plot of the novel is resolved through an explicit demonstration of the meaninglessness of an historical doctrine.[100]

Such a view, however, over-simplifies Quentin's problem. Quentin does believe in original sin. It is a search, certainly, which leads Quentin

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[97] Ibid., p. 195.

[98] Ibid., p. 196.

[99] Ibid.

[100] John Arthos, "Ritual and Humor in the Writing of William Faulkner," William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, editors (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), pp. 101-118.

to death, but it is not a search for guilt but for the externalization of inner guilt into the act of sin. It is not failure in insight or understanding which prevents him from achieving success in his search; it is his fatal incapacity of will which prevents him from even the meaningful choice of sin. Quentin does not die because he comes to feel that guilt is non-existant; he dies precisely because he feels it does exist and he himself exists forever shut off from its reality through his inability to choose.

But because the paralysis of will which marked Quentin's life is so very obvious, it is easy to lose sight of the amount of actual violence in which he has been involved. Quentin's relationship with Caddy, although marked by his failure to consumate the sexual attraction between them, was also marked by violent quarrels, some of such duration and intensity that both bore the physical marks of the quarrel in blood. Quentin did not enter into a vital sexual relationship with Natalie, but he quarreled with her, violently called her names, pushed her and sent her home crying. Quentin would not kill Ames, but he quarreled with him, wildly attempting to hit him. He would not interfere actively with Caddy's marriage to Herbert, but he quarreled violently with him before the wedding. Quentin was often a part of family quarrels, both with Jason and Caddy, and later with his parents in the family scene over spying on Caddy. He did not lack for courage--he was a good horseman, and when his broken leg had to be reset he did not whimper or cry. His anger at the horse he expressed overtly--he "laid

for him with a piece of coal."[101] The mother remembers Quentin as headstrong and rebellious. The reader becomes aware of the consistent violence in which Quentin moves partially through the intensity of the emotion which he expresses. His arguments with Shreve and Spoade are furious. He expresses his despair through smashing the watch and twisting off the hands. Quiet scenes erupt into violence when Quentin is present. The serenity of the walk beside the stream, the friendly silence between him and the Italian child is broken abruptly by the brawling fight and the summons into court. The quiet picnic scene and Gerald's monologue about his Leda is interrupted by Quentin's attack on Gerald and the resultant bloody fight. But the hallmark of Quentin's violence is summed up in his query concerning the fight: "Did I hurt him any?" and Shreve's laconic answer, "You may have hit him. I may have looked away just then or blinked or something."[102] The violence in which Quentin has consistently been involved has been ultimately futile; it has gained him nothing. It has not been that he could not act, but that the violence in which he participated was so wrongly directed that it produced no worth-while effect, not even the longed for one of condemnation, the consumation of guilt.

It is possible then to see in Quentin the broad outlines of Faulkner's parallel to Calvin's view of the depravity of man. Guilt is not so much an overt act as an inward inherent condition; this guilt becomes the ultimate reality, and the will inevitably wills ill, involving

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[101]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 132. [102]Ibid., p. 183.

man in violence. Quentin is the product of a past with its legend of glory; yet of Quentin it may be said that he,

> in some strange and evil way, is held under this kind of voluntary, yet sadly free necessity, both bond and free; bond in respect of necessity, free in respect of will: and what is still more strange, and still more miserable, it is guilty because free, and enslaved because guilty, and therefore, enslaved because free.[103]

Joe Christmas of Light in August is, like Quentin, one of Faulkner's most complex characters. He is marked by an almost Ahab-like violence in both his life and death. He appears abruptly in Jefferson, his hat at an arrogant and baleful angle above his face,

> something definitely rootless about him as though no town nor city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home. And that he carried his knowledge with him always as though it were a banner, with a quality ruthless, lonely, and almost proud.[104]

There was a look about his face: "'We ought to run him through the planer,' the foreman said. 'Maybe that will take that look off his face.'"[105] Only death, however, ever did this; then "he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes."[106] And in the long search which occupies Joe Christmas before he reaches that final moment of peace, Faulkner documents again something parallel to the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin and the depravity of man.

A part of the complexity which surrounds Joe Christmas lies in the name itself, and the number of strong connections with the

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[103]Calvin, op. cit., p. 254.

[104]William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 27.

[105]Ibid., p. 28.

[106]Ibid., p. 407.

Christ story which the events of his life demonstrate. There is his uncertain paternity, his virgin mother, his christening on Christmas day, his age at death, and other similarities which are apparent in the story, but the Christ symbolism has remained somewhat a puzzle since Joe Christmas also demonstrates some very unChristlike characteristics. Beckman Cottrell notes in his extensive treatment of the Christian symbols in Light in August that once the symbols are assembled the reader still cannot take Joe as a literal Christ.[107]

Joe appears arrogant, proud and ruthless; he is cruel, sadistic at times and often brutal. It is true that the reader is given a knowledge of circumstances which makes such behavior understandable and psychologically believable, but Christlike it is not. Joe Christmas becomes a very obscure Christ symbol, regardless of the reader's knowledge of the fear and guilts that drive him. Joe is scarcely believable as a Christ figure when he stands, ruthless, implacable in the darkness, and nearly chokes Brown to death. If Brown becomes the Judas figure as Cottrell suggests, the incongruity is heightened.[108] This violent vengeful man bears little resemblance to that Christ who exemplified his doctrine of forgiveness in his own bitter death. The brutal hands, the endless bloody fights with nameless men and women on miles of nameless streets is not precisely an accurate picture of the Man who taught

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[107]Beckman Cottrell, "Christian Symbols in Light in August," Modern Fiction Studies, 2:207-213, Winter, 1956.

[108]Ibid.

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Joe Christmas as a Christ symbol is also a conflicting picture when placed by that of the Corporal in A Fable, Faulkner's allegory of a modern Christ. Beside the Corporal's quiet yielding to his fate, his death for the cause of peace, Joe is a dark and enigmatic Ahab indeed.

Joe Christmas as a Christ figure is most incongruous with the central action of the novel. The tragic web of events which spins out to its fatal conclusion hangs from the fact of Joe's mixed blood. It is true that there is a question as to the actual fact of miscegenation, but this doubt only adds irony to the story; it does not in any way alter the action, since Joe believes himself to be tainted, and acts accordingly. To raise the question of the actual validity of Joe's belief is to stimulate some controversial discussion, but it is not to aid substantially in understanding the tragic man the Player moved for pawn. It is the tainted blood, whether real or fancied, which makes Joe, like old Sam Fathers, "himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment, and the mausoleum of his defeat."[109] The significance of a Christ figure whose action is orientated around his tortured awareness of his own tainted blood and sense of guilt becomes invested with such ambiguity that its communicative value is nearly destroyed. Joe is not a black Christ; he is a white Christ with black blood. In the terrible

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[109]William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1942), p. 168.

emasculation of the death scene it is the black blood which rushes out upon his slayers. Cottrell suggests in this regard that on this level Joe does not represent the Christ as the Corporal does, but "Joe is the humanity for which Christ dies."[110] Viewed from the unifying principle of the paradoxes inherent in the Calvinistic doctrine of man, Joe Christmas loses not his paradoxical nature but some of the ambiguity surrounding it, and his life, like that of Quentin Compson, demonstrates marked parallels to the Janus-faced truths of orthodox theology.

Calvinism taught, as has been pointed out, that every man was born a son of God; this by no means meant that he was redeemed, but it did affirm the uneffacable similarity that every man bore to his Creator. If Joe Christmas then becomes an Everyman, the resemblance he bears to the Christ becomes comprehensible in its major points. Everyman is born the son of God; Everyman has his hidden years, and, as Faulkner remarks of Labove, in The Hamlet, his Gethsemane and Golgotha too.[111] Everyone man bears about him a certain similarity to the son of God, even the man with tainted blood. In those of Faulkner's novels such as The Sound and the Fury where the aristocratic family connections are present, Faulkner uses this symbolism to express man's involvement with the glory of his past, but in Light in August there are no convenient symbols to express Faulkner's belief in the God-like qualities of such a man as Christmas, a social outcast, tainted, doomed, lost.

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[110] Cottrell, loc. cit.

[111] William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 134.

The Christ relationship provides then this aspect of Joe's character and sets up the tension between the image of God in man and the evil which marks him for its own. It is true that Joe, like that older Christ, is a wanderer with no place to lay his head. But Calvinism is full of the vivid portrait of man, lost, a wanderer without God. Joe is no stranger, enroute to that heavenly city, an alien in this world. Alien he is, tragically, but there is no suggestion in Light in August that it is because he is heaven-ward bound. This is an Ahab at home on neither land nor sea. If Quentin Compson is Faulkner's Hamlet, Joe Christmas is his Ahab, lost, a wanderer in search of his Moby Dick. Just as Melville made Ahab's name a warning, Faulkner says of Christmas:

> It was as though there was something in the sound of it that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle. Only none of them had sense enough to recognize it.[112]

Light in August becomes the story of a son of God who with tainted blood seeks through long years of violence for peace. "All I wanted was peace," Christmas thinks. "That didn't seem too much to ask."[113] Yet, like Quentin Compson, this was a peace which was obtainable only in terms of guilt.

Joe's earliest memories were of the haunting sense of something wrong; of something that marked him, that set him apart from other children. The toothpaste episode with the dietician marked the growth

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[112]William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 29.

[113]Ibid., p. 97.

of his sense of guilt; the stealing of the toothpaste provided an opportunity for him to be punished, for guilt to be moved from the world of whispers to something concrete for which he could be punished and so find peace. The failure of the nurse to punish him was torture to the child, who had never before had to wait three days to be punished.[114] "He was waiting to get whipped and then be released," Faulkner records.[115] The dietitian had no comprehension that:

> he believed that he was the one who had been taken in sin and was being tortured with punishment deferred and that he was putting himself in her way in order to get it over with get his whipping and strike the balance and write it off.[116]

Only punishment could bring the release of peace, and the history of Joe Christmas's life is the long tragic effort to do something evil enough to merit punishment terrible enough to still forever the agony of guilt, and bring that peace.

It is Joe's frantic effort to find guilt which makes him totally unable to bear kindness or mercy. As a child he avoided the dietitian who had given him the dollar instead of the punishment he craved. When he came to the McEachern household he rejected Mrs. McEachern's efforts to help him and later stole his clothes from the laundry to prevent her replacement of lost buttons.[117] He hated her efforts to interfere with the brutal beatings administered by McEachern:

She would try to get herself between him and the punishment which

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[114] Ibid., p. 109. [115] Ibid. [116] Ibid., p. 107.

[117] Ibid., pp. 145, 93.

> deserved or not, just or unjust, was impersonal, both the man and the boy accepting it as a natural and inescapable fact.[118]

He dumped the food she brought him on the floor, rejected her willingness to help him escape McEachern, and insisted upon stealing the money which he knew the woman would have willingly given him. In the last frantic moments of his flight from the McEachern house he stopped to remind the old woman:

> "I didn't ask you for it," he said. "Remember that. I didn't ask, because I was afraid you would give it to me. I just took it. Dont forget that."[119]

He could not bear the gift of a nickel from the waitress, her pity or her understanding; he could not take Byron's offer of lunch at the mill though he had been three days without food. Food was "woman's muck," and both the act of giving and the gift threatened him with mercy, not justice, and this he could not bear. It was the kindness of Mrs. McEachern which moved him to hatred:

> Because she had always been kind to him. The man, the hard, just, ruthless man, merely depended on him to act in a certain way and to receive the as certain reward or punishment, just as he could depend on the man to react in a certain way to his own certain doing and misdoings.[120]

> It was not the hard work which he hated, nor the punishment and injustice. He was used to that before he ever saw either of them. He expected no less, and so he was neither outraged nor surprised. It was the woman: that soft kindness which he believed himself doomed to be forever victim of and which he hated worse than he did the hard and ruthless justice of men.[121]

For Joe to have accepted mercy would have meant an acknowledgement

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[118] Ibid., p. 146. [119] Ibid., p. 182. [120] Ibid., p. 146.

[121] Ibid., p. 147.

of his need of them. Joe, as Hyatt Waggoner points out, has a fierce and terrible pride which extends even to his sin.[122] He hates all thought of mercy; he wishes only a guilt and punishment so great that through them he can find peace. He seeks, in effect, a type of rewards and punishment, a system through which he, like Quentin, can become the arbiter of his own fate; he, not God, can by this means determine his own destruction.

Quentin Compson and Joe Christmas differ diametrically in the methods by which each seeks his own destruction; Quentin seeks condemnation but refuses the necessity of choice; Christmas is involved in the violence of his Ahab-like search for evil. But both demonstrate a fundamental picture of human nature parallel to the conception of Calvin: they are proud, yet tainted by inherent guilt. Guilt becomes the ultimate reality for both, and both share the heritage of wills which are twisted to choose sin inevitably, and to choose sin in the perverted pride of thus determining their own destiny. It is this which is the essence of Calvin's view of the depravity of man: to choose evil inevitably and in defiance of the will of God.

Joanna Burden, like Joe Christmas, finds her ultimate reality in guilt. Her New England ancestry, the family names (Calvin and Nathaniel) and her father's explanation of the curse of slavery help prepare the reader for Joanna's search for condemnation.[123] The

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[122]Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), p. 105.

[123]William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 221.

aura of corruption which began to gather around her was frightening to Joe since it seemed to be alien to his own life of "healthy and normal sin."[124] In the last phase of her relationship with Joe, Joanna becomes aware of the change which is about to overtake her:

> It was something out of the darkness, the earth, the dying summer itself; something threatful and terrible to her because instinct assured her that it would not harm her; that it would overtake and betray her completely, but she would not be harmed: that on the contrary she would be saved, that life would go on the same and even better, even less terrible. What was terrible was that she did not want to be saved. "I'm not ready to pray yet," she said aloud, quietly, rigid, soundless, her eyes wide open, while the moon poured and poured into the window, filling the room with something cold and irrevocable and wild with regret. "Don't make me have to pray yet. Dear God, let me be damned a little longer, a little while."[125]

When she begins her final prayer vigil it is as though in the "abjectness of pride" and the use of the symbolwords which Christmas had taught her, she asks not for forgiveness but for condemnation to match the measure of her sin.[126] And for Joanna Burden, as for Quentin Compson and Joe Christmas, peace comes only in death.[127]

In Faulkner's other novels the pattern continues. In The Wild Palms men are marked by their guilt and their struggle with it. Wilbourne and Charlotte feel the need to act, to become involved, but can do so only in adulterous relationship and the suffering that it brings. They cannot bear even the appearance of respectability,[128] or that

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[124] Ibid., p. 227.

[125] Ibid., p. 231.

[126] Ibid., p. 245.

[127] Ibid., p. 253.

[128] William Faulkner, The Wild Palms (New York: Random House, 1939), pp. 133-135.

sin be made routine and meaningless.[129] The novel revolves around what might be termed the courage to be, but this is courage in terms of guilt, "the courage of your fornications," as Mac says.[130] Wilbourne realizes that in order to live he must destroy the pseudo peace he had achieved through withdrawal from the world,[131] a conclusion to which Charlotte has already come, but he seems to conceive this only in terms of violence and guilt, just as the old doctor who marks his failure to experience life as the result of his fear to sin.[132] In the companion novel the old man is a convict, a murderer whose effort to live, like Wilbourne's, resulted in violence and death. The novel pictures him caught in the senseless, remorseless grip of nature, and striving with his "furious unflagging will" to return to the prison where he can peacefully continue the payment of his debt to society. The novel ends, as Waggoner points out, with both men in the state prison, as a result of deliberate choice, Wilbourne when he might have chosen suicide, the convict when he renounced the freedom thrust upon him by the circumstances of the flood.[133] Faulkner has presented again the inevitable bias of man's will to violence. Both men had begun in relative innocence, yet each experiences life only in terms of violence, and peace only in payment of guilt.

In Absalom, Absalom there is Thomas Sutpen, whose insistence upon his design involves the destruction of his family and himself; there is Rosa Coldfield, whose analysis of Sutpen as a demon masks from

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[129] Ibid., p. 126. [130] Ibid., p. 101. [131] Ibid., p. 35.

herself her own hatred, frustration, and sense of guilt. If Sutpen's design was merely to vindicate the poor boy turned away from the front door of the rich man's mansion, then his rejection of his son becomes an ironic compounding of the evil he himself had suffered at another's hand. Sutpen's question to Quentin's grandfather asserts its own answer when he asks:

> "You see, I had a design in my mind. Whether it was a good or bad design is beside the point; the question is, where did I make the mistake in it."[132]

The destruction of the design did not necessarily spring, as Sutpen perceived, from the character of the design itself, but from Sutpen's perception of the design. Sutpen felt the answer to his frustration must lie in terms of either an error in calculation or a betrayal of his innocence. Quentin interprets this as a kind of moral naivete:

> that innocence which believed that the ingredients of morality were like the ingredients of pie or cake and once you had measured them and balanced them and mixed them and put them into the oven it was all finished and nothing but pie or cake could come out.[133]

Sutpen had omitted consideration of himself, of the essential human condition, which again illustrates something parallel to the Calvinistic concept of man's depravity. Sutpen, like Quentin and Joe Christmas, would be his own god. He entertained no question of right and wrong, merely of mistake in his design. His fatal error lay in underestimating

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[132] William Faulkner, Absalom! Absalom! (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1951), p. 263.

[133] Ibid.

a will which, while purposing to vindicate a humiliated child, imposed with terrifying power humiliation in turn on others; which, in seeking vindication for a child's rejection, refused to say "My son."

In Faulkner's chronicle of man, the Snopeses have an important if infamous position. The story of the Snopes family is Faulkner's vivid portrayal of materialism, and the inevitable degration which results from this. The strength of Snopesism can be measured by the family's progress as, in The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion, the Snopeses succeed in conquering Frenchman's Bend, Jefferson, and, for a while, the Legislature itself. The history of the family precedes The Hamlet, however. George Marion O'Donnell pointed out in his early study of the Snopes family that Ab Snopes, the conniving head of the clan, first utilized the war and the self-interests of the Sartorises to secure a foothold in the Yoknapatawpha County world.[134] Once there, however, the Snopeses stay, their shrewdness teaching them how to obtain their goals, and their viciousness preventing them from caring how this is done.

There are some exceptions to the Snopes family character: Eck, whose naive simplicity makes him incapable of ever getting ahead in the world; and Ike, the idiot, whose love for the cow, however perverted, makes him alien to the Snopeses world. There is also Eck's

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[134]George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, editors, (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), pp. 49-62.

son, Wallstreet Panic, "the non-Snopes son of a non-Snopes."[135] The remaining Snopeses, though they differ in personality, agree in their greed and ethical irresponsibility. Although the avarice of the Snopeses is legendary, the depravity of their behavior is scarcely less so. Had Faulkner set about deliberately to illustrate the Pauline catalogue of the sins of reprobate man, the picture could be scarcely more apt. Here are adultery, fornication, theft, hatred and murder. The Snopeses represent evil in every degree from the gross to a refinement which, as Ratliff dreams, is superior to Satan himself.

The story of the exploitation of Frenchman's Bend and of Jefferson is essentially the chronicle of Flem's progress toward the presidency of the bank in Jefferson and his installation of Clarence Snopes in the legislature. Hyatt H. Waggoner notes of Flem that he approaches an incarnation of pure evil in The Hamlet, that he is uniquely exempt from the Faulknerian rule of compassion, and, in effect, apparently soulless.[136] This quality remains relatively constant throughout the trilogy, although Faulkner's attitude toward it is not constant, as will be discussed later. But the thing which marks Flem and the Snopes clan is the extent of their evil and their attitude toward it.

No Snopes is recorded as conscious of guilt. They represent an evil completely unselfconscious, untortured by awareness. There is no Quentin Compson, no Joe Christmas, no Addie Bundren here; it is

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[135] William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 145.

[136] Waggoner, op. cit., p. 233.

inconceivable that any Snopes should ask Sutpen's question of design, or comprehend Wilbourne's choice. The Snopes world pivots around Flem, sitting quietly, "chewing with that steady and measured thrust."[137] Waggoner notes Flem's placidity and his passivity in The Town, and adds that "until very near the end we never even hear of his doing anything very shocking; rather we hear of his receiving, passively, the favors showered on him by the representatives of the old order itself."[138] As Flem moves relentlessly through Frenchman's Bend and through Jefferson, Ratliff, the semi-omnicient commentator on Snopesism, remarks at last on the lack of resistance which Yoknapatwpha County has displayed. Flem has not been actively engaged in a battle; Ratliff remarks that Flem's relationship with the town has not even been a contest. It has been a game of solitare Flem has played against Jefferson.[139]

The passivity of Flem is matched by the complicity of Yoknapatawpha County. Will Varner and his son Jody had been amateur practicioners of Snopesism themselves; their fatal error was in estimating themselves able to beat Flem Snopes at his own game. Manfred DeSpain gives Flem the superintendency of the power plant, the vice-presidency of the bank, and finally the bank and his home. It is true that Flem certainly assisted him in hurrying the process, but the crucial point

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[137]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 420.

[138]Waggoner, op. cit., pp. 185, 235.

[139]William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 347.

lies in DeSpain's willingness to pay such a price to keep Eula Varner Snopes as his mistress.[140] Ratliff notes Flem's terrible drive to achieve respectability,[141] but what escapes the eye of Ratliff, temporarily at least, is Jefferson's willingness to grant Flem this respectability. The boy Charles Mallison sees the town's willingness to absorb Flem Snopes and cover his behavior;[142] Gavin Stephens understands this later, though his recognition of it is blunted by his own involvement with Eula Varner Snopes.[143]

The significance of Flem's relative passivity and Jefferson's willingness to be exploited has not been given the attention which it deserves. Waggoner comments:

> For if the old order does not somehow, after whatever necessary qualifications, stand for a superior way of life, then Snopes has no opponent and there is no conflict. All that is very nearly the case.[144]

Flem Snopes merely seeded the old Frenchman's place with silver dollars, then watched even Ratliff literally run to fall into the ancient trap. Waggoner asks:

> Whereas in earlier books representatives of the old order were often pictured as Prufrock characters, helpless to preserve values which they adequately appreciated and at least passively embodied, here there is no conflict at all. What then, is the book about, what does it say?[145]

The question is partially answered by the tone of the story and the perspective from which it is told, and in part by another parallel to the Calvinistic doctrine of the depravity of man which marks Faulkner's works.

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[140] Ibid., p. 273. [141] Ibid., p. 259. [142] Ibid., p. 303.
[143] Ibid., p. 314. [144] Waggoner, op. cit., p. 235. [145] Ibid.

Faulkner's earlier works were told from the viewpoint of the internal world. These were the novels of Quentin's doubts, of Addie Bundren's preparation for death. With the Snopes trilogy this viewpoint is abandoned, for the most part, and in its place comes Ratliff, the sewing machine salesman, with his uncanny ability both to explain and predict with sardonic humor the progress of the Snopeses. Ratliff is marked by his detachment and his immunity. He stands on the top step, quite still, "his face familiar and enigmatic, quiet, actually almost smiling," watching the Snopses as they planned to make Jefferson pay for the privilege of watching Ike Snopes with the cow.[146] When Flem brought the Texas ponies to sell the members of Frenchman's Bend, Ratliff sat on the porch of the store, "laughing, while the others sat or lounged upon the steps and the railing, sitting beneath his laughing as Eck had sat beneath their listening and waiting."[147] Although Ratliff's detachment is not complete, becoming steadily less so in The Mansion, and his immunity slips in the matter of the gold, he represents a nearly objective view of the Snopeses and their activities, especially in The Hamlet and in The Town. In The Town Gavin Stephens, although vitally involved in the Snopes story, briefly achieves this detachment in a key passage near the end of the work:

> And you stand suzerain and solitary above the whole sum of your life beneath that incessant ephemeral spangling. . . yourself

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[146]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 227.

[147]Ibid., p. 318.

> detached as God Himself at this moment above the cradle of your nativity and of the man and woman who made you, the record and chronicle of your native land proffered for your perusal . . . you, to preside unanguished and immune above this miniature of man's passions and hopes and disasters . . . . [148]

Waggoner says of this passage that there is no distinction here between the voice of Stephen and the voice of Faulkner, and that Faulkner, as man and artist, lays significant emphasis here upon detachment "unanguished and Immune."[149] This detachment and humor in the presence of what is almost the incarnation of evil presents a curious anomaly which a parallel in Calvinism makes somewhat more clear.

As has been pointed out, the conviction of guilt was conceived by the Calvinist (and Faulkner) as preparation for salvation. Man's sense of his depravity became in a sense an inverted measure of his capacity for God. But Calvin also taught that man, if left completely to the effects of his own nature, hardened his heart and rejected completely the will of God. Calvin noted that God not only withdrew completely from such men, abandoning them to their reprobate minds, but used them at times as instruments of chastisement of both His chosen people and the rebellious world.[150] Assuming that Faulkner is attempting to gain the detached view, that he is attempting to see the Yoknapatawpha County Saga as "detached as God Himself," the reason for the passivity of the Snopes and the absence of conflict in the novels becomes intelligible. The

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[148]William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Random House, 1957), pp. 315, 316.

[149]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 237. [150]Calvin, op.cit., pp.47,183,188.

God who used the Assyrians as the rod of his anger and the Civil War as the instrument of the expiation of slavery, uses the Snopses as the cure for Yoknapatawpha County's materialism. The power of the Snopeses lies in the guilt of both hamlet and town; every evil quality seen overtly in the Snopes exists in covert form in them. It is an irony worthy of a god that Will Varner who had for years foreclosed on farms, weighed the cotton and figured the "furnish" bills for Frenchman's Bend should at last suffer foreclosure himself at the hand of a Snopes. The Snopes family may furnish the sodomy, but it is the hamlet that furnishes the spectators, taking careful turns at the hole in the fence. Flem Snopes may parlay his wife's promiscuity into the presidency of a bank, but it is Jefferson which provides a mayor willing to fight every able bodied man for the privilege of making Flem Snopes a cockold. If Eula becomes the instrument by which Flem subdues Jefferson, there is an ironic justice in the fact that she was placed in his hand by Will Varner as being of no more value than the old Frenchman's Place.

The Snopeses parallel depraved man given over to the reprobate mind, and so untroubled by consciousness of guilt. These are the men of craft seen as Calvin envisions God seeing them:

> He sees the long train of deception by which the man of craft begins to lay nets for his more simple neighbor, until he entangles him in its meshes--sees the harsh and cruel laws by which the more powerful oppresses and crushes the feeble--sees the enticement by which the more wily bait the hook for the less wary, though all these escape the judgment of man, and no cognizance is taken of them.[151]

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[151] Ibid., p. 351.

The episode of the spotted ponies illustrates the immunity of Faulkner's men of craft to the law, and at the same time, their function in Yoknapatawpha County, for the victims of these men of craft in Yoknapatawpha are not suffering saints, but men whose own greed makes them willing victims.

The hamlet had been warned by Ratliff that the ponies were Flem's and Ratliff had pointed out with his inimitable satire that the men meant to buy them although they knew they would be cheated. The sting of the loss lies in the knowledge that the men of the hamlet had of both Flem and Texas ponies.

Henry Armstid is a victim of his own avarice. Although he needs the horse, his need is overshadowed by his greed, his cruelty, and his consuming pride. There is ironic justice in the fact that a man who would buy a horse at such cost to his wife, who would beat and humiliate her, and proudly disregard all advice and assistance, should have for his bargain a pony from Flem Snopes.

When the trial is held, there is a satirical justice in the fact that the Texan whom Armstid had rebuffed becomes in the hand of a Snopes the instrument by which Armstid's money is placed forever out of his reach.

There is the same satirical justice in the judgment against the Tulls, involved not only as individuals but as representatives of the hamlet. The hamlet had stood and watched Henry Armstid destroy himself, and his family with him!

"Misters," she said, "we got chaps in the house that never

> had shoes last winter. We aints got corn to feed the stock. We got five dollars I earned weaving by firelight after dark. And he aint no more despair.[152]

But the men had not answered, as they "lounged along the fence in attitudes gravely inattentive, almost oblivious." As Armstid struck his wife with the rope, then turned and struck her again, they had made no move to interfere, not even to aid the Texan, but had stood, "their faces lowered as though brooding upon the earth at their feet."[153]

Very well; since the men have chosen to remain by-standers, every man for himself, the ponies are turned loose on the by-standers and Tull takes the brunt of the result. "'If a man aint got gumption enough to protect himself, it's his own look-out,' the clerk said."[154] But the hamlet is not comfortable with such a philosophy. The men had experienced shame when they had passively permitted Armstid to abuse his wife and buy the pony by which he would be destroyed. It is this knowledge of the community's complicity which motivates Mrs. Tull's action against the Snopeses. She sat, "her face cold, furious, and contemptuous," as the trial progressed, her "grim and seething outrage" not against Tull himself, nor even the Snopeses particularly, but against "all men, all males."[155] The evil Snopeses shall be made to pay for Armstid's broken leg, the theft of Mrs. Armstid's money and the splinters in Tull's face, but Mrs. Tull knows with outrage that the

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[152]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 333.

[153]Ibid., p. 337. [154]Ibid., p. 357. [155]Ibid., p. 370, 373.

guilt includes the men of the community as well as the Snopeses. The law suit is doomed to failure by the very fact that the law suit itself is for the community an attempt to avoid personal responsibility. It is easier to fine a Snopes than to face the memory of Mrs. Armstid's appeal. The calm greed and indifference of Flem Snopes in the face of Mrs. Armstid's need evokes in the reader real indignation, but Mrs. Tull's rage against Flem Snopes with which the reader seeks to identify is made ineffective by the fact that the hamlet at the crucial moment of decision had, like men of an older story, chosen to look, then go by on the other side.

The trial scene continues in the same vein of satirical justice. If the men will stand by the fence and permit a man to destroy himself, then they cannot secure damages from the Snopeses if an innocent by-stander suffers in turn. If the men will not act personally to prevent Mrs. Armstid's loss, then they cannot force through law payment of either Mrs. Armstid's loss or Mrs. Tull's. If the men will choose the law and so evade the responsibility of human compassion, then they shall have not mercy, but justice indeed. Since the men would not act when they could, now ironically, it is not possible for them to bring Flem Snopes to trial. They can only charge Eck, the non-Snopes. Eck has offered no resistance to the suit. He has offered to pay the damages and has come to the trial prepared to do so. But to Eck's amazement, and the consternation of the hamlet, this judgment is denied by Mrs. Tull on the basis of her own testimony. The exactness of such judgment accounts in part for Mrs. Tull's anger. It is Mrs. Tull really,

rather than the judge, who delivers the opinion of the court, delivering in effect the people's own verdict on themselves. It is a scene which Jonathan Swift would have enjoyed when, the bailiff banging on the table with his cane and the judge cowering in his chair, Mrs. Tull sums up the case:

> "The horse!" Mrs. Tull shouted. "We see it for five seconds, while it is climbing into the wagon with us and then out again. Then it's gone, God dont know where and thank the Lord He dont! And the mules gone with it and the wagon wrecked and you laying there on the bridge with your face with kindling wood and bleeding like a hog and dead for all we knew. And he gives us the horse! Dont hust me! Get on to that wagon, fool that would sit there behind a pair of young mules with the reins tied around his wrist. Get on to that wagon, all of you![156]

It is a case of "all of you" indeed. And to the God presiding unanguished and immune above Yoknapatawpha County, a case in which Flem Snopes and his tribe "with destined purpose. . . while acting wickedly. . . serve his righteous ordination, since in his boundless wisdom he well knows how to use bad instruments for good purposes. . . ."[157]

The last scene of The Hamlet, following, as it does, the incident of the spotted ponies, illustrates further the soulless nature of Snopes's evil and the harsh purgative action it exerts on the hamlet, as well as the complicity of the hamlet which makes this possible.

Will Varner had given the old Frenchman's Place to Flem as a part of Eula's dowry, having considered it worthless, and himself well rid of it. Flem, however, had seeded it with silver dollars, then sat quietly while Bookwright, Ratliff, and Armstid had done the rest. The

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[156]Ibid., p. 379. [157]Calvin, op. cit., p. 188.

hoax was at length revealed and only Henry Armstid was left, still frantically digging for treasure. Idle onlookers discussed the latest Snopes maneuver:

> "Is he still at it?"
> "He's going to kill himself. Well, I dont know as it will be any loss."
> "Not to his wife, anyway."
> "That's a fact. It will save her that trip every day toting food to him. That Flem Snopes."
> "Couldn't no other man have done it. Anybody might have fooled Henry Armstid. But couldn't nobody but Flem Snopes have fooled Ratliff."[158]

But the speakers were wrong on two scores. Flem Snopes had not fooled Ratliff. Ratliff had permitted himself to be duped. Something had clicked in Ratliff's mind the first time he saw Eustace Grimm,[159] had done so a second time,[160] and when it clicked the third time, too late, Ratliff had thought:

> Only I dont want to look at it, hear it, he thought his watering eyes against the smoke which the broken chimney no longer drew out of the house, I dont dare to. Anyway, I dont have to yet.[161]

Shortly before daylight, when Ratliff finally looked at the thought he had been resolutely rejecting, he reverted to his characteristic honesty, and admitted: "Daylight will be time enought to look at it . . . I looked at it three days ago."[162]

Ratliff makes it unequivocably clear that the hoax had not been

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[158]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 420.

[159]Ibid., p. 400. [160]Ibid., p. 402. [161]Ibid., p. 412.

[162]Ibid.

a personal contest between him and Flem Snopes when Bookwright asks:

> "How did he know it would be us?"
> "He didn't," Ratliff said. "He didn't care. He just come out here every night and dug for a while. He knowed he couldn't possibly dig over two weeks before somebody saw him."[163]

Flem Snopes had merely taken the measure of the hamlet's greed, with no particular victim in mind, and Ratliff had been the victim because, as he himself noted, he didn't want to see.

The onlookers are somewhat more correct about Henry Armstid, but still dishonest in the emphasis they placed on Snopes. The story of the spotted horses has prepared the careful reader for this. The reader knows of Armstid's cruelty and his avarice, qualities as present in Armstid as in Snopes. Jonathan Swift would have understood Faulkner's last scene much better than many contemporary critics have done: Henry Armstid, mad with greed, digging in the empty hole, the bystanders looking on and complacently saying what the hamlet wished to believe--that it is all Flem Snopes's fault. There is almost a sense of complacent pride in the spectators in the incarnate Snopes evil among them, in the convenience of having evil externalized in a Snopes so that it is no longer necessary to look within.

In the final scene Armstid is still digging, the spectators lining the fence, when Flem drives up. He stops the wagon and sits, "Chewing with that steady and measured thrust and looking over their heads into the garden."[164] Armstid suddenly, violently, drives the

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[163] Ibid., p. 404.

[164] Ibid., p. 420.

boys away from the empty hole, back into the undergrowth from which, teasingly, they had approached him. He then

> came straight back to the trench, hurrying back to it with that painful and laboring slowness, the gaunt unshaven face which was completely that of a madman. He got back into the trench and began to dig.
>
> Snopes turned his head and spat over the wagon wheel. He jerked the reins slightly. "Come up," he said.[167]

Swift would have understood precisely Flem Snopes's scorn. It was not the simplicity of the hamlet alone which Flem despised, but their greed which made them victims. Swift would have found in Flem and the story of the hamlet much that was kin to his own savage satire of the evil and stupidity of the human race. He would have understood also much of the criticism that has gathered around Faulkner's Snopes tribe--their bestiality, obscenity, and evilness. The character Gulliver was similarly charged and misunderstood. Swift would not have understood perhaps, all of Faulkner's humor--there are too many interposing factors to make the Dean completely at home with the humor of the American frontier--but inasmuch as the laughter which gathered around the Snopes saga is that of the great Cosmic Joker Himself, Swift would have understood and approved, as Calvin would have understood their function in the Cosmic Joker's hand.

Popeye in The Sanctuary, shares the same sense of mechanical evil, and functions in relation to Temple much as the Snopes clan does in their relation to Yoknapatawpha County. There is the same sense of

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[165] Ibid.

satirical justice in the fact that Temple's promiscuousness which was a constant invitation to rape should betray her into the hand of an impotent maniac; that Popeye who had killed Tommy and Red should die for a murder he didn't commit in a town of which he'd never heard.

Jason Compson, however, is closest kin to the Snopses. He held his own with the Snopeses when they took over the little town; it is not until The Mansion that Jason finally loses to Flem, a result not of miscalculation but of Jason's lapse of caution due to a triumph.[166] Jason's self portrait given in his section of The Sound and the Fury marks again the sense of depravity in which the sense of guilt is gone. "'You's a cold man, Jason, if man you is,'" Dilsey remarks,[167] and the reader agrees. Jason's greed has in it a ruthless cruelty which if equalled is never exceeded by any Snopes. Jason has often been accused of selling the Compson family into the Snopes world of materialism, but it is interesting to note here as in the story of the Snopeses that if he did so the first inroads of materialism were already present in the family itself. The materialism of Jason's father was not, again, overtly expressed like that of the Snopes world or that of his son Jason, but, like that of the Sartorises, was covert. It has escaped notice perhaps because of this reason. But if there is a difference between the

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[166]William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 325.

[167]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 225.

materialism which would sell Benjy's pasture for Harvard, the fine dead sound, and that of the Snopeses, then again the difference is in degree, not kind.

A study of Faulkner's novels reveals a view of man expressed in terms of great polarities. Man suffers perpetually a guilt which comes to him both from the past, and from within, yet man bears about him something of the image of God which cannot be effaced. Man cannot escape the necessity of choice, yet man experiences constantly the inevitable violence proceeding from a will which though not deprived of liberty cannot move except in the direction of evil. Wilbur Frohock remarks that it is men's fate, as Faulkner sees it:

> to be surrounded by evil, and inevitably, out of their own natures to be both victims and workers of evil. As with the Greeks, the sign of evil is the violence it brings forth. Evil comes out of the past which man cannot control. . . . A man may struggle against it, but he may not deny it or put it from him. The choices presented to him are really dilemmas disguised, and such victories as he wins are hollow.[168]

What Frohock has observed is true, but it does not stem from the Greek tradition. Edith Hamilton has been interested in Faulkner's works, and she has placed him not in the Greek tradition but in that of the Calvinist, adding, "He is to the very depths of him a Puritan--a violently twisted Puritan, a perverted Puritan, and that means something very strange indeed."[169]

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[168]William Frohock, The Novel of Violence in America (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1950), p. 164.

[169]Edith Hamilton, "William Faulkner: Sorcerer or Slave?" Saturday Review, 38: 39-41, 1952.

CHAPTER III

PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION

The Calvinistic doctrines of predestination, limited atonement, and election, are specific applications of the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God, which as John McNeill suggests, forms the foundation of Calvin's thought. McNeill points out that:

> Calvin's world, from stars to insects, from archangels to infants, is the realm of God's sovereignty. A reverent awe of God breathes through all his work. God, transcendent and unapproachable in majesty and unsearchable wisdom, but also immanent in human affairs, righteous in all His ways, and merciful to undeserving men is the commanding theme to which Calvin's mind ever reverts.[1]

And if in the doctrine of depravity the emphasis lies upon the will of man, in the doctrine of predestination, election and limited atonement, the emphasis lies upon the great anthithesis, the sovereign power of God. Predestination is the eternal expression of God's sovereignty in His relationship to man.

> Predestination we call the eternal decree of God by which He has determined with Himself what He would have to become of every man. For . . . eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore being formed for one or the other of these ends, we say that he is predestinated to life or to death.[2]

This predestination, occurring in infinity, rested entirely upon

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[1]John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 209.

[2]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), II, 206.

the mercy and will of God without respect to human merit.

> We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment.[3]

Men were to seek no further reason for the judgment of God than His will.

> Therefore, if we cannot assign any reason for his bestowing mercy on his people, but just that it so pleases him, neither can we have any reason for his reprobating others but his will. When God is said to visit in mercy or harden whom he will, men are reminded that they are not to seek for any cause beyond his will.[4]

To Calvin, the foundation of the will of God upon which the act of predestination rested satisfied any charge against God's justice, since God, by definition, could not will unjustly.

> The will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which he wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of his willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer, because he pleased. But if you proceed farther to ask why he pleased, you ask for something greater and more sublime than the will of God, and nothing such can be found.[5]

The atonement was limited then to those who were the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world. Participation in the benefits of the

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[3] Ibid., pp. 210-11.

[4] Ibid., p. 224.

[5] Ibid., p. 227.

[6] Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 404.

atonement was not the cause of election, but the result, and available only to the elect. Calvin argued that:

> By saying they were elected before the foundation of the world, he /Paul/ takes away all reference to worth. For what ground of distinction was there between persons who as yet existed not, and persons who were afterwards like them to exist in Adam? But if they were elected in Christ, it follows not only that each was elected on some extrinsic ground, but that some were placed on a different footing from others, since we see that all are not members of Christ. In the additional statment that they were elected that they might be holy, the apostle openly refutes the error of those who deduce election from prescience, since he declares that whatever virtue appears in men is the result of election.[7]

Calvin flatly asserted that faith held second place to election[8] and that the fact that many are not saved resulted from God's refusal to "appoint his Son their guardian," and to "engraft them all into his body by the sacred bond of faith."[9] The atonement was a part of the "covenant of life" which Calvin noted was "not preached equally to all, and among those to whom it was preached, does not always meet with the same reception."[10] The limited atonement seemed to Calvin a logical corollary of the doctrine of election. When summarizing the Pauline doctrine of predestination Calvin notes of Paul that:

> he shows that whatever favours God bestows in reference to the spiritual life flow from this one fountain, because God chose whom he would, and before they were born had the grace which he designed to bestow upon them set apart for their use.[11]

Calvin was not unaware of the strong objections to his doctrine, and of possible dangers to the faith which could easily result from

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[7]Calvin, op. cit., II, 214. [8]Ibid., p. 223.

[9]Ibid. [10]Ibid., p. 202. [11]Ibid., p. 214.

misapplication of the doctrine. As in the case of the doctrine of total depravity, Calvin was concerned to protect himself from the charge of having deprived man of choice.

Predestination did not relieve man of the necessity of choice, Calvin argued, nor did the limited atonement nullify the promise of whosoever would may come.

> In one word, those who have any tolerable acquaintance with the writings of Paul will understand, without a long demonstration, how well he reconciles the two things which those men pretend to be contradictory to each other. Christ commands us to believe in him, and yet there is nothing false or contrary to this command in the statement which he afterwards makes: "No man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father" (John vi. 65). Let preaching then have its free course, that it may lead men to faith, and dispose them to persevere with uninterrupted progress. Nor, at the same time, let there be any obstacle to the knowledge of predestination, so that those who obey may not plume themselves on anything of their own, but glory only in the Lord.[12]

Nor under any circumstances was predestination and the providence of God to be confused with the determinism of the stoics, Calvin argued. In attributing the fate of man and the functioning of the universe to God, Calvin did not predicate a universe of cold necessity. In defending himself, Calvin stated:

> Those who would cast obloquy on this doctrine, calumniate it as the dogma of the Stoics concerning fate. . . . But the dogma itself is falsely and maliciously imputed to us. For we do not with the Stoics imagine a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes, and a kind of involved series contained in nature, but we hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things--that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, he decreed what he was to do, and now by his power executes what he decreed. Hence we

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[12]Ibid., p. 236.

> maintain that, by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined.[13]

Predestination was not to be used as a cloak for man's crimes nor excuse for his despair. Calvin, interestingly enough, cited examples of this misuse of the doctrine of providence from the Greeks.

> Those who have learned this modesty, will neither murmur against God for adversity in time past, nor charge him with the blame of their own wickedness as Homer's Agamemnon does. [The Greek is cited] "Blame not me, but Jupiter and fate." On the other hand, they will not, like the youth in Plautus, destroy themselves in despair, as if hurried away by the Fates. "Unstable is the condition of affairs; instead of doing as they list, men only fulfil their fate: I will hie me to a rock, and there end my fortune with my life." Nor will they, after the example of another, use the name of God as a cloak for their crimes. For in another comedy Lyconides thus expresses himself: "God was the impeller: I believe the gods wished it. Did they not wish it, it would not be done, I know." They will rather inquire and learn from Scriptures that is pleasing to God, and then, under the guidance of the Spirit, endeavour to attain it.[14]

Calvin realized that, as McNeill phrased it, he was "making statements that do not admit of moral explanation," when dealing with the doctrines of double predestination, and the unfathomable mystery of the justice and wisdom of God in leaving the reprobate in their state of alienation and damnation.[15] Calvin's own attitude toward the doctrine is indicated in his letter to the Council at Bern in 1555:

> I know well enough that we ought to be humble and modest in the treatment of this profound mystery. . . [my] only object is to subdue the pride of the human spirit, and to teach it to reverence, in all fear and humility, the majesty of God.[16]

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[13]Calvin, op. cit., I, 179.

[14]Ibid., p. 236.

[15]McNeill, op. cit., p. 211.

[16]Calvin, as cited by McNeill, op. cit., p. 211.

In the Institutes Calvin carefully cautioned the believers in their use of the doctrine. Discussion of election is, Calvin said, "a perilous ocean" and anciety about it one of the greatest temptations with which Satan assaults the believer.[17] The doctrine was to be taught only in conjunction with the redemption in Christ and the mercy of God to undeserving men.[18] Calvin avoided the doctrine of double predestination in his catechism for children, teaching there simply that God is "almighty and altogether good," and that each of us "should be assured that He loves us and wishes to be our Father and Saviour."[19] McNeill notes the frequency with which Calvin deplores that inability of men to believe in the mercy of God, and Calvin's own reticence in his treatment of the doctrine of reprobation, and his constant effort to lead men to "wonder and worship before God's majesty, power, and grace, so that they escaped the psychological trap set by the mere doctrine of reprobation."[20]

Calvin's own understanding of the nature of the perils which attended the teaching of the doctrine of predestination is reflected in the specific directions which he gave concerning it.[21]

Predestination was not to be used as an answer for the injustice which daily surrounds man. Calvin warned:

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[17]Calvin, op. cit., II, p. 243. See also the discussion of Calvin's use of the doctrine of predestination in McNeill, op. cit., p. 211, ff.

[18]McNeill, op. cit., p. 211.

[19]Calvin, as cited by McNeill, op. cit., p. 211.

[20]McNeill, op. cit., p. 212. [21]Cf. Calvin, op. cit., I, 183.

> Therefore, since God claims to himself the right of governing the world, a right unknown to us, let it be our law of modesty and soberness to acquiesce in his supreme authority, regarding his will as our only rule of justice, and the most perfect cause of all things. . . not that absolute will indeed, of which sophists prate, when by a profane and impious divorce, they separate his justice from his power, but that universal overruling Providence from which nothing flows that is not right, though the reasons thereof may be concealed.[22]

Neither was it to be used to argue for sin in God:

> Nay, when we cannot comprehend how God can will that to be done which he forbids us to do, let us call to mind our imbecility, and remember that the light in which he dwells is not without cause termed inaccessible (I Tim. vi. 16), because shrouded in darkness.[23]

The believer must not, like the heathen in their use of fate, attribute the poverty, death, war, pestilence and suffering of mankind to a blindness in God. Instead,

> whatever happens, knowing that it is ordered by the Lord, he will receive it with a placid and grateful mind, and will not contumaciously resist the government of him, at whose disposal he has placed himself and all that he has. Especially let the Christian breast eschew that foolish and most miserable consolation of the heathen, who, to strengthen their need against adversity, imputed it to furtune, at which they deemed it absurd to feel indignant, as she was /Greek given/ (aimless) and rash, and blindly wounded the good equally with the bad. On the contrary, the rule of piety is, that the hand of God is the ruler and arbiter of the fortunes of all, and instead of rushing on with thoughtless violence, dispenses good and evil with perfect regularity.[24]

Neither was the believer to use the predestinating power of God to excuse his own lack of prudence, or to escape responsibility for his life. Calvin stated flatly:

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[22]Calvin, op. cit., I, 185. [23]Ibid., pp. 212-213.

[24]Calvin, op. cit., II, 15.

> the eternal decrees of God by no means prevent us from proceeding, under his will, to provide for ourselves, and arrange all our affairs. And the reason for this is clear. For he who has fixed the boundaries of our life, has at the same time entrusted us with the care of it, provided us with the means of preserving it, forewarned us of the dangers to which we are exposed, and supplied cautions and remedies, that we may not be overwhelmed unawares. Now, our duty is clear, namely,--to defend it; since he offers assistance,--to use it; since he forewarns us of danger, not to rush on heedless; since he supplies remedies,--not to neglect them. But it is said, a danger that is not fatal will not hurt us, and one that is fatal cannot be resisted by any precaution. But what if dangers are not fatal, merely because the Lord has furnished you with the means of warding them off, and surmounting them? . . . . God has been pleased to conceal from us all future events that we may prepare for them as doubtful, and cease not to apply the provided remedies until they have either been overcome, or have proved too much for all our care.[25]

Since the believer was unable to judge with exactness the number nor identity of the elect, he must not use the doctrine of election to attempt to determine if another is of the chosen. Calvin warned:

> Few, then, out of the great number of called are chosen; the calling, however, not being of that kind which enables believers to judge of their election.[26]

Because of this the believer must extend to other confessors what Calvin termed the "judgment of charity":

> On the other hand, foreseeing that it was in some degree expedient for us to know who are to be regarded by us as his sons, he has in this matter accommodated himself to our capacity. But as here full certainty was not necessary, he has in its place substituted the judgment of charity, by which we acknowledge all as members of the church who by confession of faith, regularity of conduct, and participation in the sacraments, unite with us in acknowledging the same God and Christ.[27]

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[25]Calvin, op. cit., I, 187. [26]Calvin, op. cit., II, 248.

[27]Ibid., p. 289.

The fact that the fate of all mankind is predestined did not relieve the believer from the responsibility of preaching the gospel. Calvin cites Augustine in this regard:

> Because we know not who belongs to the number of the predestined, or does not belong, our desire ought to be that all may be saved; and hence every person we meet, we will desire to be with us a partaker of peace. But our peace will rest upon the sons of peace. Wherefore, on our part, let correction be used as a harsh yet salutary medicine for all, that they may neither perish, nor destroy others. To God it will belong to make it available to those whom he has foreknown and predestinated.[28]

The believer was not to seek reassurance of his own election in the doctrine of predestination; man by seeking in "remotest eternity, in order that he may understand what final determination God has made with regard to him . . . plunges headlong into an immense abyss, . . . and buries himself in the thickest darkness."[29] It was in his relationship with Christ that the believer was to contemplate his election.

> Christ then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election. For since it is into his body that the Father has decreed to ingraft those whom from eternity he wishes to be his, that he may regard as sons all whom he acknowledges to be his members, if we are in communion with Christ, we have proof sufficiently strong and clear that we are written in the Book of Life.[30]

The right use of predestination and providence was to the believer the source of the "highest happiness."[31]

> But when once the light of Divine Providence has illuminated the believer's soul, he is relieved and set free, not only from the extreme fear and anxiety which formerly oppressed

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[28] Ibid., p. 238. [29] Ibid., p. 243. [30] Ibid., p. 244.

[31] Calvin, op. cit., I, 194.

> him, but from all care. For as he justly shudders at the idea of chance, so he can confidently commit himself to God. This, I say, is his comfort, that his heavenly Father so embraces all things under his power--so governs them at will by his nod--so regulates them by his wisdom, that nothing takes place save according to his appointment; that received into his favour, and intrusted to the care of his angels, neither fire, nor water, nor sword, can do him harm, except in so far as God their master is pleased to permit. . . . Hence the exulting confidence of the saints, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me."[32]

Consciousness of the eternal providence of God brings peace of mind,[33] contentment with life,[34] and "keeping us free from rashness and false confidence, will stimulate us to constant prayer, while at the same time filling our mind with good hope, it will enable us to feel secure and bid defiance to all the dangers by which we are surrounded."[35]

Two general developments of the doctrine of election must be mentioned here, however, since in the novels of Faulkner the doctrine is paralleled in two rather diverse ways.

Calvinism became a tool in the hands of those interested in reinforcing an economy based on sanctity of private property and the value of private enterprise and profit, and prosperity came to be regarded as an outward sign of election.[36] Even a cursory glance through the Institutes will provide ample evidence that, although based upon the doctrine of election, this thought is foreign to Calvin. Calvin did insist upon diligence and frugality, and had a horror of wasted time

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[32]Ibid., p. 193. [33]Ibid., p. 184. [34]Ibid., p. 178. [35]Ibid.

[36]Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 69.

and goods;[37] it is also true that he permitted the practice of charging interest on money, but he did so under strict controls of "equity and charity."[38] The extent to which Calvin is now commonly held to have believed prosperity a sign of election is one of the great ironies of history and evidence of a major neglect of primary sources.

In the first place, Calvin frequently acknowledged that the elect were often poor. Throughout the Institutes Calvin urged the believer to have patience and trust in his heavenly Father though he live in a world where the wicked prosper and the believer suffers unjustly.[39] Indeed, the existence of such a world was one of the chief reasons for instructing the believer in the doctrine of providence so that he might draw comfort by the knowledge of his heavenly Father's sovereignty when oppressed by the prosperity of the wicked and the injustice of unregenerate man.[40] Although faith assured the believer of many blessings, prosperity was not necessarily one of them:

> Faith does not promise us length of days, riches, and honours (the Lord not having been pleased that any of these should be appointed us); but is contented with the assurance, that however poor we may be in regard to present comforts, God will never fail us. The chief security lies in the expectation of future life, which is placed beyond doubt by the word of God.[41]

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[37]Calvin, op. cit., I, 523. [38]McNeill, op. cit., p. 221.

[39]Calvin, op. cit., I, 380. "If believers fix their eyes on the present condition of the world, they will be greviously tempted to believe that with God integrity has neither favor nor reward; so much does impiety prosper and flourish while the godly are oppressed with ignomity, poverty, contempt and every kind of cross."

[40]Ibid., p. 183. [41]Ibid., p. 493.

In the second place, as has been pointed out, Calvin taught that it was impossible to determine the elect from the non-elect on the basis of any external sign, prosperity or any other, although true faith certainly manifested itself by good works.[42] George Mosse in commenting on the economic development of the doctrine of election points out that although the doctrine of election did degenerate into self-righteousness and the concept of simple living into middle class industry and acquisitiveness, Calvin himself felt that "the only sign of God's free grace given through Christ was in the soul and no outward signs of inward grace could exist in the theater of the world."[43]

Calvin regarded riches in many cases as a snare to the believer's spiritual well being.[44] McNeill cites extensively and widely from Calvin's works in discussing this point:

> Whenever prosperity flows uninterruptedly, its delights gradually corrupt even the best of us . . . . The Israelites laughed at all reproofs because God seemed propitious, as though he manifested His favor by prosperity . . . . This is a common evil (On Deuteronomy, 8:12).
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> (Zophar's false opinion that the afflicted are wicked and) that when we see a man live at his ease we may know thereby that he is in God's favor . . . is the error of the Sadducees (who did not believe in the life to come). This conslusion . . . proceeds from the devilish error that men's souls are mortal (On Job 21:7).

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[42]Calvin, op. cit., II, 248, 289.

[43]George L. Mosse, The Reformation (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), p. 46.

[44]Calvin, op. cit., I, 429, 183.

> For we see daily the state of the faithful is more miserable than the state of the despisers of God (On Job 42:7).
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> Prosperity like wine inebriates men, nay even renders them demented (On Hosea 9:13).
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> Prosperity (to the godly) is like mildew or rust. It is necessary that we be subject from first to last to the scourges of God . . . for our hearts are enfeebled on prosperity so that we cannot make the effort to pray (On Zechariah 13:9).
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> Therefore whosoever esteemeth this judgment of God by the present estate of men . . . he must needs fall away from the faith at length into Epicurish contempt of God (On Acts 23:8).[45]

McNeill also cites Calvin's commentary on Psalm 30:6 in which Calvin refers to a "'carnal confidence' which 'creeps upon the saints' in prosperity, rendering them complacent toward their own faults and insensitive to the wrongs endured by others."[46]

The extent to which misunderstanding has accumulated around this issue of the economic aspects of Calvinism is unfortunate. Even a brief examination of the material available lends weight to McNeill's point that:

> the whole subject cries out for more adequate and comprehensive study than it has received. Ideas that have been brought to expression by late Calvinists have been read back into Calvin to the confusion of history.[47]

It is precisely this confusion which has marked the attitude of some critics toward Calvinism in Faulkner's work. Thorough study of the economic aspects of Calvinism is beyond the design and scope of this paper, but it is necessary in the study of Faulkner's novels to understand, however, that Calvin did not regard prosperity as a sign of election; riches themselves, for believers so blessed, were a trust from

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[45] McNeill, op. cit., pp. 221-224. [46] Ibid., p. 425.

[47] Ibid., p. 418.

God, requiring careful, faithful stewardship.[48] Unless this stewardship of riches was rightly administered, the believer ran the grave risk of riches themselves becoming not blessings but the snare of Satan, a serious detriment to his spiritual welfare.

A social distortion of the doctrine of election grew up parallel to the economic view of Calvinism. Merle Curti in pointing out this aspect of the growth of Calvinism states that:

> the Calvinist emphasis on the idea that the few were to be saved and the many condemned was in many respects more appropriate to a class society than the evangelical stress on a common humanity in which each soul, however humble, communed directly with God on the same equal plane with everyone else.[49]

Here again is a fundamental distortion of Calvin's view, and an ironic illustration of the extent to which a man's historical influence may vary from his avowed intent.[50] Calvin, as has been pointed out, expressly warned against such a use of the doctrine of election. No one could know with certainty who the elect were, and the emphasis was to be upon the believer's communion with Christ which alone gave assurance of election. The judgment of charity was to be extended to others.

McNeill in dealing with this distortion of Calvin's doctrine points out that any theory of racial supremacy or political exclusiveness had no support from Calvin: any man who argued that political rights were for

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[48] Ibid., p. 418. [49] Curti, op. cit., p. 72.

[50] Mr. Curti could perhaps have made more clear the distinction that the Calvinist emphasis of which he speaks is a distortion of historical Calvinism which in its emphasis on the priesthood of the believer also did much to assert the worth of the individual.

the elect only found himself "embarrassed by his own Calvinist affirmation that he does not know who the elect are. God alone knows."[51] McNeill goes on to point out, however, that historically:

> Not all Calvinist political writers have been ardent protagonists of the people's liberty. Where they have gained status and security for their own class, they have sometimes exhibited a stubborn political and social conservatism, marked, for example, by an unwillingness to extend the franchise beyond narrow limits.[52]

Merle Curti, in his chapter on cultural nationalism in the old South, points out how both the economic and social distortion of Calvinism took deep root in the South, noting the process by which historically the "half-chivalric, half-Puritan moral code of the planting aristocracy" developed, and the "Presbyterianism of the substantial planter" became a significant factor in Southern nationalism.[53] To this was added a strong strain of middle class doctrines of morality, piety and orthodox religious faith.[54]

> Implicit in this philosophy and closely related to one purpose at hand--the justification of the plantation and slavery interest --was the idea that any economic and political system based on the mistaken concept of the equality of human nature could not succeed. Man was born neither free nor equal . . . .[55]

Ralph Henry Gabriel points out what he feels to be the influence of Calvin upon John Calhoun and other southern writers who were attempting to defend the institution of slavery.[56] But the thing which Gabriel

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[51] McNeill, op. cit., p. 413.

[52] Ibid., p. 417.

[53] Curti, op. cit., p. 436.

[54] Ibid., p. 440.

[55] Ibid., p. 443.

[56] Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), pp. 110, 111.

seems to be pointing out is again a distorted application of Calvin's basic position which was made in the effort, so to speak, to justify man's ways to God, rather than a direct effort of Calvin's actual theology. Study of both the economic and social application of Calvinism in the South poses problems which again lie outside the scope and design of this paper. McNeill points out the ambiguity in social, economic and racial matters that becomes inevitably associated with a discussion of Calvinism,[57] and what is true generally is true specifically in the history of the South. But for further study of parallels of Calvinism in Faulkner's novels, it is sufficient to note that such a dual distortion of the doctrine of election and predestination did take place, and that the social and economic condition of the South provided fertile soil in which such distortions took root.

The sense of predestination which hangs over Faulkner's novels is readily apparent. Characters are "doomed," and do that which they "just have to do," as Sutpen remarked, and experience what are the slings of outrageous fortune in a manner that has brought a storm of reaction from critics. Many of the early critics seized upon this aspect of Faulkner's work and laoeled Faulkner as the worst of the naturalists, a writer who, as Alan Thompson charged, was motivated by "a pessimistic skepticism to which morals and aspirations are merely customs and dreams, and the world is an inhuman mechanism."[58] The long and stormy route

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[57]McNeill, op. cit., p. 425.

[58]Alan Thompson, "The Cult of Cruelty," The Bookman, 73:477:487, January-February, 1932.

from such an estimate of Faulkner's work to the present estimate of Faulkner as a moralist accounts in part for both the amount and diversity of criticism which has appeared. Although modern critics are somewhat more in agreement about the "moral" character of Faulkner's novels, the extent to which the early misunderstanding of Faulkner lingers on is apparent in Henry Steele Commager's comment concerning American literature:

> The . . . of the new century was already heavy with pessimism . . . [so that] artists found it so easy to take refuge in scientific doctrines which seemed to provide some ultimate justification for that pessimism. These doctrines did more. They not only explained away evil, otherwise so outrageous a phenomenon in America, but seemed to wash away guilt. For they shifted the responsibility for the sorry mess into which mankind had drifted from society itself to the cosmos. It was a new Calvinism, indulged in most recklessly by those who most vehemently repudiated all religion: denying free will to men, it placed responsibility for what seemed evil not on an omnipotent and inscrutable God but on an omnipitent and inexorable Nature . . . it is the sum and substance of most of the novels of William Faulkner.[59]

Mr. Commager's awareness of parallels to Calvinism which exist in Faulkner's work is an accurate one, but his charge that Faulkner places responsibility on an omnipotent and inexorable nature fails to take into account the number of parallels to a much more orthodox point of view which occur in the novels, and ignores Faulkner's rigorous insistence upon human responsibility.

The reader is soon aware of the sense of the inevitable which permeates the Compson household, a family doomed, dispossessed, and

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[59]Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 109-110.

eventually scattered. There is in the family themselves varying degrees of awareness of their doom, and expression of it. Caddy, for example, Faulkner tells us in the preface to The Sound and the Fury, was doomed and knew it and accepted it,[60] but Caddy's own confession of her doom is not made in terms of an omnipotent and inexorable Nature, as Mr. Commager phrases it,[61] but in terms of the old dilemma of the curse of an angry God on human guilt. In a scene with Quentin Caddy says in calm acceptance of the inevitable, "Dont cry Im bad anyway you cant help it," and to Quentin's frantic charge, "Theres a curse on us . . . theres a curse on us," Caddy makes no denial; she merely adds quietly, "Hush come on and go to bed now."[62] Quentin, Caddy's daughter, says angrily to Jason, "I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I dont care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere where you are."[63] And Jason himself, for all his cynical materialism views his own loss of money as the result of the decree of Omnipotence. Jason visualizes himself as pulling Him down from His throne, battling the legions of both hell and heaven to reach his fleeing neice.[64] Faulkner speaks as though the whole town and county itself seem apparently aware of the predestinated ends to which the family moves.[65]

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[60] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 10.

[61] Commager, op. cit., p. 110.

[62] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 176.

[63] Ibid., p. 207.

[64] Ibid., p. 322.

[65] Ibid., p. 7.

[66] Ibid., p. 176.

The misuse of the doctrine of election in The Sound and the Fury illustrates several of the dangers listed by Calvin. Both Quentin and his mother use the doctrine of predestination and providence to avoid responsibility. Quentin uses it to avoid the responsibility of will and belief and to excuse his own guilt. "Theres a curse on us its not our fault is it not our fault," he says to Caddy, although the form of his question indicates his discomfort with the position he has taken.[66] Mrs. Compson shows no discomfort nor awareness of the falseness of her position. "I just know something will happen," she says in her maudlin self-pity but "perhaps it'll be the best thing, for all of us."[67] Benjamin's idiocy, Caddy's promiscuity and Quentin's suicide were all providential judgments which she must suffer, although she cannot understand "what she could have done to have given birth to children like them."[68] There is no awareness of any failure on her part. On that last Easter, Mrs. Compson is sure that Quentin, like her uncle, is also a suicide, since "It's in the blood. Like uncle, like niece. Or mother, I dont know which would be worse. I dont seem to care."[69] When Dilsey rejects this fatalism, Mrs. Compson retorts that there can be no other reason for the family tragedies since "It cant be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever God is, He would not permit that. I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am."[70] Only the curse on the Compson blood, their election to damnation, and the

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[66] Ibid., p. 176. [67] Ibid., p. 30. [68] Ibid., p. 121.
[69] Ibid., p. 315. [70] Ibid.

inscrutable providence of God can explain the family history to Mrs. Compson, who, as a Bascomb and a lady, cannot believe herself in any degree responsible for the ruin by which she is surrounded.

It is interesting to note, however, that there is a sense in which what Mrs. Compson says is true. The degeneration of the Compson household is incomprehensible if taken solely as a matter of fact. Sociology and psychology in combination do not adequately account for Faulkner's portrayal of Quentin's suicide, Caddy's promiscuity, nor the father's dipsomania. It is manifestly impossible to believe that the deterioration of the Southern aristocracy left only these avenues of escape from its legacy. Such a reading of The Sound and the Fury leads to a narrow regionalism which is far removed from the "human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing," as Faulkner remarked in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech.[71] There is a curse upon the household of Compson, and there is a strange sense of predestined ends toward which the family moves. When Dilsey says, "I've seed de first en de last,"[72] the reader is moved because it is exactly this which the reader has observed--the dissolution of a household once splendid, but which in sound and fury disintegrates before his very eyes. Yet for Mrs. Compson to use the very thing which in one sense is profoundly true as a cloak for her own self-pity, her own weakness and

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[71]William Faulkner, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech," as printed in Mary Cooper Robb, William Faulkner: An Estimate of His Contribution to the American Novel (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1957), p.1.

[72]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 313.

refusal to accept responsibility, moves the reader to a sense of contempt which may temporarily obscure the fact that the curse and the destiny are both very real factors in the novel in spite of Mrs. Compson's distortion of them.

The father also misuses the doctrine of predestination, and in precisely the way indicated by Calvin that some might--by predicating a blind fate that wounds good and bad indiscriminately.[73] Man is, the father says, "conceived by accident . . . and every breath is a fresh cast with dice already loaded against him. . . ."[74] "Despair or remorse or bereavement is not particularly important to the dark diceman . . . love or sorrow is a bond purchased without design and which matures willynilly and is recalled without warning to be replaced by whatever issue the gods happen to be floating at the time. . . ."[75] But his belief in the "dark diceman" is irrevocably linked for the father with his belief in the decanter as the cure for awareness of the rolling of the loaded dice, and when eventually Benjy visits the cemetery, his jimson weed in his hand, the father and Quentin lie side by side, both having surrendered the bond long before the dark diceman called the issue in.

It is Dilsey alone who endures, who survives the sound and the fury. For this reason it is particularly interesting to note her use of the doctrine of predestination and election. In the first place, Dilsey rejects the concept of blind fate, or "luck" as Roskus calls it, which

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[73]Calvin, op. cit., II, 15. [74]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 196.

[75]Ibid.

has made Benjy what he is, and hangs in brooding ominousness over the Compson place.

> "Taint no luck on this place." Roskus said. . . . "They been two /deaths/ now . . . going to be one more. I seen the sign, and you is too." . . . "Going to be more than one more." Dilsey said. "Show me the man what aint going to die, bless Jesus."[76]

When Benjy's name was changed the negroes had discussed it: "Can he smell that new name they give him? Can he smell bad luck?" Dilsey had retorted: "What he want to worry about luck for? Luck cant do him no hurt."[77]

Dilsey rejects also blind despair. Quentin when buying the flat-irons to weigh his body down remembers Dilsey and thinks, "What a sinful waste Dilsey would say."[78] Quentin is aware that life was precious to Dilsey, and that to her, despair was no adequate reason for the "sinful waste" of it.

Yet Dilsey seems keenly aware of the sense of progression of the family's deterioration. "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin" Dilsey said,[79] and when Melissa Meek took the picture of Caddy to Dilsey, Dilsey had refused to look. On the train back to Jefferson Melissa Meek thought, crying quietly:

> that was it she didn't want to see it to know whether it was Caddy or not because she know Caddy doesn't want to be saved hasn't anything anymore worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose.[80]

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[76] Ibid., p. 49.

[77] Ibid., p. 108.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 313.

[80] Ibid., p. 16.

In her own life, however, Dilsey seems untroubled, and sure. In Dilsey there is no agonized question of doubt, or guilt.

> Huh, Dilsey said. Name aint going to help him. Hurt him neither. Folks dont have no luck, changing names. My name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they's long forgot me.
>
> How will they know it's Dilsey, when it's long forgot, Dilsey, Caddy said.
>
> It'll be in the Book, honey, Dilsey said. Writ out.
>
> Can you read it, Caddy said.
>
> Wont have to, Dilsey said. They'll read it for me. All I got to do is say Ise here.[81]

Dilsey's assurance rests precisely where Calvin said it should rest--her fellowship with the "remembered Lamb."[82] When ministering to the grieving Benjy, Dilsey said gently, "You's de Lawd's chile, anyway. En I be Hisn'n too, fo long, praise Jesus."[83] and the reader is prepared to accept Dilsey's assurance of her election as true.

Hyatt Waggoner has indicated that in his estimation it is Faulkner's "uneasy relation to his Christian background" which is the central and determinative factor in Faulkner's writings.[84] This is perhaps no more apparent than in the matter of predestination. Why is it that Dilsey alone "endues"? Dilsey knows exactly what time it is, regardless of the clock, and Dilsey can well be patient since, assured of eternity, she has no need of hurry, having all eternity to come. Yet why is it that Dilsey alone perceives time in just this way?

Why is it that only Dilsey and Benjy experience Easter, can see

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[81] Ibid., p. 77. [82] Ibid., p. 313. [83] Ibid., p. 333.

[84] Hyatt Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), p. vi.

"de doom crack en hears de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead whut got de blood en de ricklicshun of de Lamb"?[85] Faulkner does not ask the reader to believe with Dilsey, and critics and readers alike should beware of an attempt to force Faulkner into an orthodox "Christian" position. But there is a sense in which perhaps the artist speaks more truly than the man confesses. Only Dilsey brings order to the sound and the fury, although she lives by the ignorance of the gospel, foolishness to the Greeks, and certainly so to the cultured dipsomaniac with his Ovid and Horace and Catullus. Faulkner, perhaps for many reasons, certainly understands the man who came to believe in the dark diceman and then found a decanter necessary to relieve the pain; but, understandable or not, Faulkner portrays this man helpless in the face of the storm. Perhaps even more comprehensible to Faulkner is Quentin's problem. "There is a curse on us, is it our fault its not our fault," might well be the expression of much of Faulkner's own thought concerning the human dilemma. Quentin, however, could not find peace in his father's dark diceman any more than the father himself could, and although aware of Dilsey's faith, Quentin could not attain it, and he too was swept under. Jason's materialism succeeds only in destroying himself, not Dilsey; the mother with her self-pity, and sanctimonious suffering under the "judgments of God" destroys herself, her daughter, and granddaughter. Dilsey alone endures. Dilsey is the elect indeed, perhaps in a more orthodox sense than is commonly recognized. Faulkner's

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[85]Faulkner, op. cit., pp. 312, 313.

summary of the sound and the fury raises some questions concerning Dilsey though it deals directly with Ben:

> The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place.[86]

What is Dilsey's position if each is in its ordered place? And if each is in its ordered place, who has done the ordering? The dark diceman? If so, then by some inexplicable manner, Dilsey has escaped his machinations. Apparently Faulkner does not find the dark diceman any more satisfying than did the father and Quentin, yet, like Quentin, Faulkner displays much ambivalence concerning Dilsey's Easter, and the "anneal-ment and the blood of the remembered Lamb".[87] If some are elect to damnation in Faulkner's work then Dilsey seems to be in a unique way elect to salvation for a reason that Faulkner does not make clear. Uneasy as Faulkner may be with the tradition of predestination, the atonement is limited in practice if not in theory in The Sound and the Fury for a reason as unfathomable as Calvin's will of God.

As I Lay Dying points up further Faulkner's uneasy relation with the doctrines of predestination, election, and limited atonement. George Marion O'Donnell comments of the novel that:

> Fundamentally, As I Lay Dying is a legend; and the procession of ragged, depraved hillmen, carrying Abbie Bundren's body through water and through fire to the cemetery in Jefferson, while people flee from the smell and buzzards circle overhead--

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[86]Ibid., p. 336. [87]Ibid., p. 313.

> this progress is not unlike that of the medieval soul toward redemption.[88]

Medieval in pattern the procession may be, but the questions concerning the human condition which are raised by the procession bear the stamp of Reformation thinking.

Cora Tull is a satire of the results of misuse of the doctrines of election and predestination. In her first appearance, she raises the issue of riches and the decree of God. Having baked some cakes for a town woman who subsequently changed her mind, Cora thinks "Riches is nothing in the face of the Lord, for He can see into the heart," but adds aloud, "Maybe I can sell them at the bazaar Saturday."[89] A few minutes later she thinks, "The Lord can see into the heart. If it is His will that some folks has different ideas of honesty from other folks, it is not my place to question His decree."[90] Then later:

> I could have used the money real well. But it's not like they cost me anything except the baking. I can tell him that anybody is likely to make a miscue, but it's not all of them that can get out of it without loss, I can tell him. It's not everybody can eat their mistakes, I can tell him.[91]

And throughout the novel Cora Tull displays the degeneration of the doctrine of election into what George Mosse called middle-class acquisitiveness.[92]

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[88]George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, eds. (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), p. 55.

[89]William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 341.

[90]Ibid., p. 342. [91]Ibid., p. 343. [92]Mosse, op. cit., p. 46.

Cora, of course, feels herself perfectly capable of determining the elect. Addie Bundren is not one of them. Watching Addie upon her death bed, Cora thinks, "But the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her."[93] Cora is, however, equally sure that she is one of the elect, and Faulkner satirizes this in one of the funniest scenes of the novel--Cora Tull riding home from Addie's funeral, shawl around her and umbrella over her though it has ceased raining, singing triumphantly, "I am bounding on toward my God and my reward."[94]

Cora is also capable of determining the will and decree of God in any circumstance, and in her argument with Tull over the log which upset the casket, the "hand of God" as Cora termed it,[95] Faulkner satirizes the paradox of the Calvinist in relation to decree and will. Tull argues:

> "Then how can you say it was foolish?" I said. "Nobody can't guard against the hand of God. It would be sacrilege to try to."
> "Then why dare it? Cora says. "Tell me that."
> "Anse didn't," I said. "That's just what you faulted him for."
> "His place was there," Cora said. "If he had been a man, he would 'a' been there instead of making his sons do what he dursn't."
> "I don't know what you want, then," I said. "One breath you say they was daring the hand of God to try it, and the next breath you jump on Anse because he wasn't with them." Then she begun to sing again, working at the wash-tub, with that singing look in her face like she had done give up folks and all their foolishness and had done went on ahead of them, marching up the sky, singing.[96]

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[93] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 342.

[94] Ibid., p. 404.

[95] Ibid., p. 448.

[96] Ibid., p. 449.

Cora has remained by Addie Bundren's bedside during her fatal illness, reminding the reader somewhat of a vulture perched on a fence. Yet Cora says:

> Why, for the last three weeks I have been coming over every time I could, coming sometime when I shouldn't have, neglecting my own family and duties so that somebody would be with her to face the Great Unknown without one familiar face to give her courage.[97]

And it is with this hypocritical paragon of virtue that Addie Bundren had her debate about the nature of results of sin. Cora undertook to instruct Addie concerning sin since Addie had spoken as though "she knew more about sin and salvation than the Lord God Himself, than them who have strove and laboured with the sin in this human world,"[98] the latter, of course, epitomized by Cora herself. Addie rejected Cora's invitation to "open her heart and cast from it the devil of vanity and cast herself upon the mercy of the Lord," although Cora prayed for "that poor blind woman as I had never prayed for me and mine."[99] Addie Bundren remembered later:

> One day I was talking to Cora. She prayed for me because she believed I was blind to sin, wanting me to kneel and pray, too, because people to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just words too.[100]

However, as Waggoner points out in his discussion of As I Lay Dying, many of Addie's thoughts in her section are rationalization; Cora Tull, though perhaps wholly hypocritical, is at least half-right concerning

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[97] Ibid., p. 352. [98] Ibid., p. 460.

[99] Ibid., p. 461. [100] Ibid., p. 468.

Addie's pride, her self-concern, her rejection of her children, and her rejection of life itself.[101]

The preacher, Whitfield, like Cora, is a satire of organized religion. When Whitfield heard that Addie was dying he spent all night in prayer, deciding whether death necessitated confession of the adultery in which he had engaged. Having decided that it did, he started out for the Bundrens, and gave elaborate praise to "O Lord, O Mighty Ruler of all," when he learned that the bridge had washed out, ostensibly because each difficulty to be surmounted was evidence of the Lord's personal attention to the confession Whitfield had purposed to make. The reader's impression, however, is of Whitfield's relief at any respite, however it came, from facing community scandal in case Addie had decided to confess. And when, a day late, Whitfield reached Tull's house and learned that Addie was already dead, his prayer of relief confirms the reader's suspicion:

> It was He in His infinite wisdom that restrained the tale from her dying lips as she lay surrounded by those who loved and trusted her; mine the travial by water which I sustained by the strength of His hand. Praise to Thee in Thy bounteous omnipotent love; Opraise.[102]

Here again is the convenient use of providence to avoid serious responsibility and profound questions of guilt.

Before Addie's death, Dewey Dell, the daughter, had also yielded to the snare of using providence as a cloak for her acts. While picking cotton with Lafe she had thought:

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[101]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 80. [102]Faulkner, op. cit., pp. 469, 70.

> Because I said will I or won't I when the sack was half-full because I said if the sack is full when we get to the woods it won't be me. I said if it don't mean for me to do it the sack will not be full and I will turn up the next row but if the sack is full, I cannot help it. It will be that I had to do it all the time and I cannot help it.[103]

Dewey Dell must now in the circumstances of her mother's funeral take responsibility not only for her share of the family's involvement in the promise made to Addie, but her own responsibility for her unborn child.

Faulkner's portrayal of the mususe of the doctrine of predestination is,however, accompanied by his presentation of the same doctrine in a quite different form during the long procession to the Jefferson cemetery where Addie Bundren can rest in peace.

There are many ambiguities in As I Lay Dying, and Addie Bundren is one of the most puzzling. She has been variously regarded as a heroine, and as a sadist and misanthrope. The truth lies probably somewhere in the complicated area between the two extremes. As Roger Shinn has pointed out, Faulkner would perhaps greet the idea of existentialism in his work with "an existential snort,"[104] but the fact remains that Addie Bundren's search for meaning in life is basically an existential problem, although this has not been readily recognized. "The reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time," her father had said,[105] and in every

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[103] Ibid., pp. 355, 356.

[104] Roger L. Shinn, The Existentialist Posture (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 102. Dr. Shinn, formerly of Heidelburg College and Vanderbilt University Divinity School, is now Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, New York, N. Y.

[105] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 461.

violent act of self-assertion, from the sting of the switch on her pupils, through the experiences of marriage, child-birth and adultery, Addie Bundren seeks through violation of herself and others to be in such a way that, her aloneness violated, she then could get ready to die. Addie Bundren's search has been to escape words, the empty theological labels of sin and redemption, and to satisfy her terrible longing to be, to experience existentially what she felt when lying in the dark she could hear "the dark land talking of God's love and His beauty and His sin."[106] Addie found her duty, not like Cora's to charity, but to "the alive, to the terrible blood, the red bitter flood boiling through the land."[107] When waiting for Whitfield in the woods Addie would think "of the garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood of the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air."[108] Yet Addie dies, a bitter and frustrated woman, the core of her being untouched by love or grief.[109] Addie Bundren as a person remains, in many respects, ambiguous, undefined, as the story develops around the family's pilgrimage to carry her body back to Jefferson.

Anse Bundren is not presented as sympathetically as Addie. Anse is shiftless, weak, lazy, self-pitying, stubborn, and ignorant, but the reader dare not condescend, although he is often left with a sense of

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[106]Ibid., p. 466. [107]Ibid., [108]Ibid.

[109]Addie Bundren seeks constantly to use people to satisfy herself; even her love for Jewel was a part of her need for self-violation. Waggoner makes a strong case for Addie's rejection of love as a part of her rejection of life. See Waggoner, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

outrage. Anse Bundren flying in the face of all common sense and all decency has subjected his family to an ordeal which has resulted in financial deprivation for all of them, further violation for his daughter, a broken leg and hours of apparently needless physical suffering for Cash, an insane asylum for Darl and an experience for all the family of degradation and shame, yet Anse Bundren emerges in some way triumphant, store teeth and new wife, phonograph and all. In spite of the fact that it is possible for the reader to intellectually comprehend the obvious value of fidelity to a promise, it is still impossible for any readers to accept on the emotional level Faulkner's presentation of Anse as a hero. The answer is not a simple one. Waggoner remarks that:

> The plot of the novel could be summarized as a journey that begins at the "back door" and moves to the "front door" of the world, progressing en route through a "Passion Week of the heart."[110]

And for Faulkner the "Passion Week of the heart" involves committal in a nearly Existentialist sense and something which has a strange kinship to the Calvinistic doctrine of election.

Who would have thought Anse Bundren a hero? Certainly not his neighbors:

> "What's Anse so itching to take her to Jefferson for, anyway?" Huston says.
> "He promised her," I say. "She wanted it. She come from there. Her mind was set on it."
> "And Anse is set on it, too," Quick says.
> "Ay," Uncle Billy says. It's like a man that's let everything slide all his life to get set on something

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[110]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 86.

that will make the most trouble for everybody he knows."
"Well, it'll take the Lord to get her over that river now," Peabody says. "Anse can't do it."
"And I reckon He will," Quick says. "He's took care of Anse a long time, now."
"It's a fact," Littlejohn says.
"Too long to quit now," Armstid says.
"I reckon He's like everybody else around here," Uncle Billy says. "He's done it so long now He can't quit."[111]

Even less did Cora Tull regard Anse as a hero. Cora regarded Vardaman as "a judgment on Anse Bundren. May it show him the path of sin he is a-trodding."[112] But the path Anse Bundren was trodding was forever incomprehensible to Cora.

Called of God, Anse Bundren had his own lonely journey to make; he bears no outward sign of inward grace, yet deeply committed, Anse is pulled with resistless power toward the crisis experience of his life. He is kept by an unexplainable providence in the face of overwhelming difficulty; he is a stranger, a pilgrim, a wanderer, yet experiences a triumphant homecoming at last. Beside the stark brutality of Anse Bundren's experience, Cora Tull's good works appear as the ludicrous counterfeits of living that they are. Who are the elect? God knows, answers the true Calvinist, and as good works may be manifestation of faith so may they also be the deception of the enemy himself. Who would have thought Anse Bundren of the elect? Certainly not Cora Tull nor Preacher Whitfield, nor many readers. But who are to number the chosen of God? In his sovereign will God chooses, and in His sovereign power He calls, and in His mercy He preserves those whom He has called.

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[111]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 402. [112]Ibid., p. 389.

And beside the saccharine sweetness of Cora Tull's self-righteousness, Faulkner juxtaposes the strange spectacle of a soul, small, self-pitying, twisted and capable of much evil, yet caught in the resistless tide of an experience which lifts it inexplicably out of itself into a committal past recall. And in the person of Anse Bundren Faulkner parallels again the Calvinistic insistence upon the inexplicable sovereign calling of God, and the veil that cloaks God's dealing with a soul from the curious eyes of an unbelieving world.

Light in August has often been cited as Faulkner's terrible condemnation of Calvinism, but it is more accurate to say, as William Van O'Connor phrases it, that the novel "is at the center a probing into the terrible excesses of the Calvinist spirit."[113] The excesses which are portrayed are primarily in the characters of McEachern and Hines, and represent the distortion of the doctrine of predestination in the case of Hines to support a manical racism, and in the case of McEachern to mask personal sadism and middle-class materialism.

When McEachern brings Joe Christmas as a foster child into his home, he announces to the child:

> "You will find food and shelter and the care of Christian people," the man said. "And the work within your strength that will keep you out of mischief. For I will have you learn soon that the two abominations are sloth and idle thinking, the two virtues are work and the fear of God."[114]

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[113]William Van O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1954), p. 72.

[114]William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 126.

The materialism of McEachern is overshadowed, however, by the ruthless quality of his bigotry, his self-righteous cruelty. There is perhaps no more terrifying picture of fanatical Protestantism than the scene in which McEachern beats the child Joe Christmas unconscious because the child will not learn the Presbyterian catechism.[115]

McEachern to some extent represents symbolically the Law, or as William Malin suggests, the Calvinist's God the Father, the embodiment of the Law which is to be obeyed at any cost.[116] When McEachern whipped Joe for failure to learn the catechism, it was the Law, abstract, absolute, punishing the rejection of the Law, the punishment given in all "righteousness," and utterly without mercy. McEachern's voice is described as "not unkind. It was just cold, implacable, like written words."[117] During the ordeal in which Joe was beaten unconscious, McEachern is described as "carved stone, his eyes ruthless, cold but not unkind."[118] After the merciless beatings were over, McEachern knelt, and, insisting that the only semi-conscious boy kneel with him, prayed that God would be as magnanimous as he in forgiving the boy.[119] Joe's experience with the prostitute Bobbie expressed his violent rejection of McEachern's rigid, religious denial of sex. On the fatal night that he observed

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[115] Ibid., pp. 129-134.

[116] Irving Malin, William Faulkner (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 10.

[117] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 130.

[118] Ibid., p. 131.

[119] Ibid., p. 133.

Joe slip away from the house, McEachern "felt something of that pure and impersonal outrage which a judge must feel."[120] Riding the old white horse as he pursued Joe, he seemed a grotesque juggernaut of judgment; in the dance hall, McEachern as the "actual representation of a wrathful and retributive Throne,"[121] indicted Bobbie as a "harlot" and a "Jezebel" before Joe struck him down.[122] McEachern as a symbol of the excesses of Calvinism in the concept of God the Father gives a terrible intensity to the scene in which the fugitive Joe Christmas goes into the church, terrorizes the congregation, and with upraised fists, curses God.[123] In cursing one Father he cursed both.

Hines is no less terrible than McEachern. The "small, dirty man" is obviously mad,[124] but the reader is moved to something like horror when Hines, who had sat on the step with a shotgun to prevent help from reaching his dying daughter,[125] declares with his wild fanaticism, "I am the instrument of His will."[126] Many speeches of Hines are bitter parodies of predestination and foreknowledge,[127] and the picture of the mad man attempting as an "instrument of God" to serve "the foreordained will of God"[128] by inciting the lynching of the grandson whom he has hated and haunted over the years and whose mother he murdered, would suggest that the doctrine of predestination is

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[120]Ibid., p. 176. [121]Ibid., p. 178. [122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid., p. 283. [124]Ibid., p. 110. [125]Ibid., p. 331.

[126]Ibid., p. 333. [127]Ibid., pp. 334-336. [128]Ibid., p. 337.

forever anathema to Faulkner. But it is important to notice that what Hines says in bitter parody of predestination is sometimes said by Faulkner's other characters, sympathetically. For example, Doc Hines, in the terrible scene in which he teaches the child that his "nigger" blood is the act of a vengeful God, perverts his sin to God's account by saying, "His will be done. Not yours and not mine, because you and me are both a part of His purpose and His vengence."[129] But Ike McCaslin, one of Faulkner's most sympathetically drawn characters, expresses this same thought in Go Down Moses; looking at the ruined delta, Ike thinks: "No wonder the ruined woods I used to know dont cry for retribution! . . . The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge."[130] Ike in rejecting his patrimony speaks of election of God, and Faulkner is apparently in sympathetic agreement with Ike when he says:

> And He probably knew it was vain but He had created them and knew them capable of all things because He had shaped them out of the primal Absolute which contained all and had watched them since in their individual exaltation and baseness and they themselves not knowing why nor how nor even when: until at last He saw that they were all Grandfather all of them and that even from them the elected and chosen the best the very best He could expect (not hope mind: not hope) would be Bucks and Buddies and not even enough of them . . . until one day He said. . . . This will do. This is enough. . . .[131]

The McCaslin cousin also concedes the matter of election later in the discussion when he says:

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[129] Ibid., p. 336.

[130] William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1941), p. 364.

[131] Ibid., pp. 282, 283.

> 'Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him as you say Buck and Buddy were from theirs'.[132]

Such a comparison makes it obvious that McEachern and Hines do not represent all that Faulkner has to say about election. The very strength of Faulkner's satire of the misuse of predestination should have suggested earlier the attraction the doctrine in historic form holds for him, as well as his uneasiness concerning it.

The fate of Joe Christmas in Light in August illustrates also the tension between will and decree within the concept of predestination. Joe Christmas begins his long journey down "the street lonely, savage, and cool,"[133] not knowing that "his own flesh as well as all space was still a cage."[134] Faulkner notes as Joe enters Mottstown years later:

> he is entering it again, the street which ran for thirty years. It had been a paved street, where going should be fast. It had made a circle and he is still inside of it. Though during the last seven days he has had no paved street, yet he has travelled farther than in all the thirty years before. And yet he is still inside the circle. 'And yet I have been farther in these seven days than in all the thirty years,' he thinks. 'But I never got outside that circle. I have never broken out of the ring of what I have already done and cannot ever undo,' he thinks quietly, sitting on the seat. . . the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upward as death moves.[135]

Joe perceived himself at times as moving down a predestined path, himself a victim. "Something is going to happen," he thought.[136] Yet the course

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[132] Ibid., p. 299.

[133] William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 228.

[134] Ibid., p. 140.

[135] Ibid., p. 296.

[136] Ibid., pp. 103, 121, 247.

of his life pivoted also on a moment of choice, "exulting perhaps at that moment as Faustus had, of having put behind now at once and for all the Shalt Not, of being free at last of honor and law."[137] The street itself Joe had chosen: "the savage and lonely street which he had chosen of his own will."[138] Yet down the street Joe moved, "doomed with motion, driven by . . . despair."[139]

Light in August is full of the paradox of choice and predestination. Joe receives a note from Joanna Burden, and Faulkner comments:

> He should have seen that he was bound just as tightly by that small square of still undivulging paper as though it were a lock and chain. He did not think of that. He saw only himself once again on the verge of promise and delight.[140]

Later when Joe is beginning to realize that he is going to kill Joanna Burden, Faulkner notes:

> he believed with calm paradox that he was the volitionless servant of the fatality in which he believed that he did not believe. He was saying to himself I had to do it already in the past tense; I had to do it. She said so herself.[141]

Yet against all that made Joe a victim of circumstance Joe himself pits his own will:

> thinking, "No. If I give up now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be."[142]

Did Joe choose to be? Did he choose his "kinship of stubbornness" with McEachern, his own abnegation of compassion?[143] Did he choose

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[137] Ibid., p. 180. [138] Ibid., p. 225. [139] Ibid., p. 197.

[140] Ibid., p. 238. [141] Ibid., pp. 244, 245.

[142] Ibid., p. 232. [143] Ibid., p. 130.

the "air of cold and quiet contempt," his hat cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face?[144] There is nothing lovable about Joe, yet by the time the reader reaches that last terrible scene in which "the Player moved him on the Board," Joe's crucifixion is every man's death.[145] There is a strange bitterness to the scene: the exhausted man fleeing for his life from Grimm who moved with "the implacable undeviation of juggernaut or Fate,"[146] yet who in his frantic flight is only a pawn in the Player's hand. When the Player is down, his young priest, Percy Grimm, springs back from Joe's dying body, flinging the bloody butcher knife behind him.[147]

Was Joe's death the decision of the Player or a result of Joe's choice? Faulkner's answer seems to be essentially Calvinistic in that it is not either-or, but both. All men are pawns, yet all men have choice, although as with the dark diceman of The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner is not comfortable with the Player. If Joe is the Player's victim, then, much as Dilsey escaped the dark diceman, Faulkner portrays Lena and Byron Bunch as escaping the Player's hand, and the novel poses as many questions as it answers.

Some of the answers, however, lie in Faulkner's usual theme of love and committal. Joe thinks, after the murder of Joanna Burden has been committed:

> of names and times and places--which he had been conscious of all his life without knowing it, which were his life, thinking

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[144] Ibid., p. 27.
[145] Ibid., p. 405.
[146] Ibid., p. 403.
[147] Ibid., p. 407.

> God perhaps and me not knowing that too He could see it like a printed sentence, fullborn and already dead God loves me too like the faded and weathered letters on a last year's billboard God loves me too.[148]

The scene is a strange one, the homicidal maniac thinking in fantasy God loves me too, but the question the thought poses is a knotty one. Why is Joe so late in recognizing this? To say that Joe is a victim of society which has turned the religion of love into hatred and crucifixion, as McEachern and Hines so vividly demonstrate, may answer some questions, but it poses others concerning Lena Grove and Byron Bunch, and even Hightower. Why can Lena so keenly experience such an implicit faith in the love and care of God that she can make alone and on foot her journey from Doane's Mills to Jefferson in perfect confidence? Why is it that Byron Bunch and Hightower experience love and compassion and find at last the courage to be? Do they not live in the same society? Since Lena Grove and Byron Bunch, and Hightower in a special sense, seem to parallel the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, they will be dealt with at length later, but it is necessary to point out here that much like Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury, and Cash, the committed one in As I Lay Dying, Lena has the final word in Light in August. And again, as in The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner does not ask the reader to believe with Lena, whose faith is, to all practical purposes, a rephrasing of Dilsey's simple fundamentalism. Lena, like Dilsey, is presented without argument and explanation. She endures, when the agony and the darkness have swallowed Joe and Hightower also. Waggoner in

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[148] Ibid., p. 91.

summarizing the novel notes that "As we sit with Hightower in the twilight, we are likely to feel that the darkness is more powerful than the light."[149] But if the reader sits with Hightower in the twilight, it is because the reader's pride prevents him from sitting where Faulkner left him at the end of the novel--with Lena as she sits in the truck, the child in her arms, her face calm, quiet, surprised by joy. The truck driver told his wife:

> "I looked back and saw her face. And it was like it was already fixed and waiting to be surprised, and that she knew that when the surprise come, she was going to enjoy it. And it did come and it did suit her. Because she said, 'My, my. A body does get around. Here we aint been coming from Alabama but two months, and now it's already Tennessee!" [150]

There is no darkness there.

The Player or the dark diceman has his counterpart in other of Faulkner's novels. In Absalom, Absalom, he is "Fate, destiny, retribution irony--the stage manager, call him what you will" to Miss Rosa,[151] the Creditor to Shreve,[152] and "Fate . . . to blackjack you" to Quentin.[153] In The Wild Palms he is the Cosmic Joker and the Manipulator.[154] In The Hamlet he is that "Prime maniacal Risibility,"

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[149]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 120.

[150]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 444.

[151]William Faulkner, Absalom! Absalom! (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1951), p. 247.

[152]Ibid., pp. 178-181. [153]Ibid., p. 240.

[154]William Faulkner, The Wild Palms (New York: Random House, 1939), pp. 52, 247.

and the "Gorgon-face of that primal injustice" which had blasted the mind of the Idiot Ike Snopes empty and clean forever of any thought; he is the "You" against which Jack Huston flings his savage grief and rage.[155] In Go Down Moses he is the Arbiter, the Architect, the Umpire.[156] The Mansion portrays him at first as "They" and "Them",[157] but Mink Snopes discards "Them" in place of the "Old Master" who just punishes, and does not joke.[158]

Yet as in The Sound and the Fury and Light in August the dramatic tension in the novels includes a parallel, more orthodox view of man and the universe. Miss Rosa may blame the stage manager in Absalom, Absalom, but Quentin and Shreve conclude that Thomas Sutpen's design failed for a more complex reason involving at a minimum grave matters of human injustice and ignorance of the true nature of the human heart. In The Wild Palms the significance of the story turns upon human decisions--the will to be involved in human suffering, or the refusal to do so; Wilbourne's refusal to take place with the poison, and the old convict's triumph over the river, though the climax of the novel, are in no sense the result of the antics of

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[155]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), pp. 215, 98, 249.

[156]William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1942), pp. 226, 258.

[157]William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Random House, 1959), pp. 5, 6, 7, 16, 24, 27, 30, 37, 39, 42, 106.

[158]Ibid., pp. 398, 403, 414, 416.

the Joker or the actions of the Manipulator--they are the triumph of the human will and heart. If God is the remote Arbiter, the Architect, the Umpire in Go Down Moses, he is also the God who in an effort to free his people calls Ike McCaslin to his priesthood of renunciation and expiation of the sins of slavery. Huston in The Hamlet may rage against the Prime maniacal Risibility which killed his young bride, but Huston is the mystical fanatic protestant;[159] there is no rage in Ratliff, the semi-omnscient commentator on Snopesism; Ratliff watching Armstid destroy himself, talks, "murmurous, not about gold, money, but anecdotal, humorous, his invisible face quizzical, bemused, impenetrable."[160] Ike Snopes's mind in The Hamlet may be "empty and clean forever" as a result of his glimpse of that "Gorgon-face of . . . primal injustice," but it is Ike who experiences a love so intense that its tenderness has a quality near lyric mysticism, although it is an act of sodomy in a world of brutal materialism.

The heritage of scientific and material determinism and the pessimism which has seemed to characterize the present age, have in many respects reinforced the tendency of Faulkner's critics to see in Faulkner what they had been accustomed to seeing in other writers--man, helpless in the grip of forces which inevitably overpower and destroy him. Man is obviously helpless in much of Faulkner's work; many move on what is in effect a predestined course to inevitable

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[159]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 244.

[160]Ibid., p. 412.

damnation. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, has been much impressed with Faulkner's work, and regards it highly; yet he objects because Faulkner gives his characters too little freedom.[161] But the very intensity of Faulkner's bitterness, the depth of his compassion for the Player's pawns, betray no Nietzschian epitaph for a dead God. Roger Shinn in discussing Albert Camus, who perhaps more than any one man has given Faulkner his wide reception in France, says of Camus:

> He is almost a theologian who disbelieves in God, a man so thirsty for divinity that he resents God for not existing. His themes are familiar Christian ones: the decision to join the innocent sufferers rather than the sinful conquerors, the torments of the guilty conscience, the pained cry for redemption. He shows us tragic characters who can at least glimpse heroic nobility. He almost says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He cannot say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."[162]

Faulkner shares this thirst of Camus for divinity. Unlike Camus, however, his thirst is not altogether to know if God is, but to know what he is like, if there is balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul. Faulkner's characters do say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is the cry of Joe Christmas down the cool savage street, of Addie Bundren, lying in the dark, of Joanna Burden, trying to pray, of Quentin Compson, of the Corporal, even of feckless Temple Drake. But unlike Camus, Faulkner the artist does have characters who say "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," whether or not Faulkner the man can so

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[161] Jean Paul Sartre, "Time in Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury," Reprinted in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, editors (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1954), p. 188.

[162] Ibid., p. 102.

so confess.

Many of Faulkner's characters live in such a way that for reasons not always clear, perhaps to either Faulkner or reader, they escape the machinations of the diceman, the player, the cosmic joker, and an accurate estimate of Faulkner's work cannot be made until more attention is given to these, Faulkner's elect to salvation. The atonement is limited in Faulkner, but it is not non-existant as some critics would have readers believe. As William Van O'Connor has insisted in his effort to shift the emphasis on Faulknerian criticism, Faulkner's work must be understood from the standpoint of Faulkner's belief in man as capable of selflessness, endurance, love and honor.[163] O'Connor, however, does not deal adequately with the fact that in Faulkner's work not all men are capable of selflessness, endurance and love. The fact that only a small minority are so in practice if not potential would suggest that in a startling way the old orthodox doctrine of election is a vital part of Faulkner's militant humanism, as the existential suffering of Faulkner's elect would suggest his kinship with the new philosophy of the century.

Paul Tillich, whose Protestant theology has placed him among existential writers, has defined faith not so much as a grasping but as a being grasped.[164] Roger Shinn in commenting upon this idea adds, "The Christian leaps across the chasm toward God because God has already

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[163] O'Connor, op. cit., p. xi.

[164] Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 188. Tillich defines faith: "Faith . . . the state being grasped by the God beyond God."

crossed that chasm to meet men."[165] This seems to be the case for Faulkner's elect. Dilsey, Anse Bundren, Lena Grove, Cash Bundren, Ike McCaslin--all have experienced essentially an indefinable being grasped which has somehow enabled them to be capable of selflessness, endurance, love and honor when those around them destroy and are destroyed. Faulkner has said that he believes in God; yet, the artist plainly shows that the man is not sure exactly what kind of God there is beyond the chasm.[166] There are times when Faulkner's intense identification with suffering humanity makes him echo the cry of Jewel in As I Lay Dying, "Because if there is a God what the hell's he for."[167] Faulkner the man may not always be sure what He's for, but the characters of Faulkner the artist who are the elect to salvation seem to have found Him something curiously kin to the old orthodox Savior and Redeemer of men. And in their experience of faith not as grasping but as being grasped, Faulkner's characters seem in a vital sense to embody Reformation thinking come full circle again.

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[165]Shinn, op. cit., p. 125.

[166]Faulkner when asked by the Japanese if he believed in Christianity replied, "Well, I believe in God." See Faulkner at Nagano (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, Ltd., 1956), p. 203. See also Waggoner, op. cit., pp. 238-245 for an account of several of Faulkner's public statements relevant to his faith.

[167]William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 347.

CHAPTER IV

IRRESISTABILITY OF GRACE AND PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The irresistability of grace was to Calvin a necessary corollary of the doctrine of election. In outlining the Institutes Calvin states:

> But, as the Holy Spirit, who creates and preserves our faith, does not unite all men to Christ, who is the sole author of salvation, chapter xxi treats of the eternal election of God, to which it is owing that we, in whom he foresaw no good which he had not previously bestowed, are given to Christ, and united to him by the effectual calling of the Gospel.[1]

This movement begun in the depraved will of the elect was not to be resisted:

> This movement of the will is not of that description which was for many ages taught and believed--viz. a movement which thereafter leaves us the choice to obey or resist--but one which affects us efficaciously.[2]

The doctrine of irresistability of grace was made necessary not only by the depraved nature of man but also by the fact that to have made the reception of grace in any way dependent upon the will of man was, to Calvin, to have diminished God's glory in the gift of salvation.

> It is, therefore, robbery from God to arrogate anything to ourselves, either in the will or the act. Were it said that God gives assistance to a weak will, something might be left us; but when it is said that he makes the will, everything good in it is placed without us. Moreover, since even a good will is still weighed down by the burden of the flesh, and prevented

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[1]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1957), I, 29.

[2]Ibid., p. 260.

> from rising, it is added that, to meet the difficulties of the contest, God supplies the persevering effort until the effect it [sic] obtained.[3]

The process of conversion Calvin quoted from Augustine's Treatise De Correptione et Gratia where he shows:

> First, that human will does not by liberty obtain grace, but by grace obtains liberty. Secondly, that by means of the same grace, the heart being impressed with a feeling of delight, is trained to persevere, and strengthened with invincible fortitude. Thirdly, that while grace governs the will, it never falls, but when grace abandons it, it falls forthwith. Fourthly, that by the free mercy of God, the will is turned to good, and when turned perseveres. Fifthly, that the direction of the will to good, and its constancy after being so directed, depend entirely on the will of God, and not on any human merit. Thus the will (free will, if you choose to call it so), which is left to men is . . . a will which can neither be turned to God, nor continue in God, unless by grace; a will which, whatever its ability may be, derives all that ability from grace.[4]

To the soul of the elect the Holy Spirit grants the gift of faith by which the believer becomes a participant in the benefits of the atonement:

> For in regard to justification, faith is merely passive, bringing nothing of our own to procure the favour of God, but receiving from Christ everything that we want.[5]

Yet in this matter as in others Calvin was careful to protect the will. The believers were to "submit to him [Christ] in voluntary obedience; nay unless they place their entire happiness in him, they will never yield up their whole selves to him in truth and sincerity."[6]

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[3]Ibid., p. 259. [4]Ibid., p. 264.

[5]Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1945), II, 72.

[6]Calvin, op. cit., I, 41.

The believer was to be marked by repentance "which in every Christian man lasts as long as life . . . ."[7] Yet the believer was to rest securely since:

> Those whom Christ enlightens with the knowledge of his name, and admits into the bosom of his Church, he is said to take under his guardianship and protection. All whom he thus receives are said to be committed and intrusted to his by the Father, that they may be kept unto life eternal.[8]

But the perseverance in which all elect were maintained rested, as did election, solely upon the will of God:

> And this is the only reason why some persevere to the end, and others, after beginning their course, fall away. Perseverance is the gift of God, which he does not lavish promiscuously on all, but imparts to whom he pleases. If it is asked how the difference arises--why some steadily persevere, and others prove deficient in steadfastness--we can give no other reason than that the Lord, by his mighty power, strengthens and sustains the former, so that they perish not, while he does not furnish the same assistance to the latter, but leaves them to be monuments of instability.[9]

Perseverance did not, however, predicate perfection. The saint was promised power to prevail not human perfection in this world.

> Paul acknowledges that he was not exempt from this species of contest when he says, that for the purpose of subduing his pride a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him . . . . This trial, therefore, is common to all the children of God. But as the promise of bruising Satan's head . . . applies alike to Christ and all his members, I deny that believers can ever be oppressed or vanquished by him. They are often, indeed thrown into alarm, but never so thoroughly as not to recover themselves. They fall by the violence of the blows, but not mortally. In fine, they labour on through the whole course of their lives, so as ultimately to gain the victory though they meet with occasional defeats.[10]

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[7] Ibid., p. 510.

[8] Calvin, op. cit., II, 245.

[9] Calvin, op. cit., I, 527.

[10] Ibid., p. 154.

The believer, however, was not to seek assurance of the sustaining power of his God in any doctrine or dogma, but, as in the case of election, in the person of Christ:

> Therefore, if we would know whether God cares for our salvation, let us ask whether he has committed us to Christ, whom he has appointed to be the only Savior of all his people. Then, if we doubt whether we are received into the protection of Christ, he obviates the doubt when he spontaneously offers himself as our Shepherd, and declares that we are of the number of his sheep if we hear his voice. . . . Let us, therefore, embrace Christ, who is kindly offered to us, and comes forth to meet us; he will number us among his flock, and keep us within his fold.[11]

Patience in tribulation became for the believer experiential proof of the sustaining power of God:

> This Paul teaches, when he says that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience. God having promised that he will be with believers in tribulation, they feel the truth of the promise; while supported by his hand, they endure patiently. This they could never do by their own strength. Patience, therefore, gives the saints an experimental proof that God in reality furnishes the aid which he has promised whenever there is need.[12]

God's sustaining power did not, however, completely alleviate pain, nor did the grace to persevere manifest itself in stoicism. The stoics, Calvin observed,

> convert patience into stupor and a brave and firm man into a block. Scripture gives saints the praise of endurance when, though afflicted by the hardships they endure, they are not crushed; though they feel bitterly, they are at the same time filled with spiritual joy; though pressed with anxiety, breathe exhilerated by the consolation of God.[13]

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[11]Calvin, op. cit., II, 245.

[12]Ibid., p. 22.

[12]Ibid., p. 18.

Calvin also noted that the promised perseverance of the saints did not guarantee great spiritual growth, since the procession of sanctification was a lifetime process, proceeding at various individual rates of progress and dependant upon the believer's willingness to seek after holiness:

> But seeing that, in this earthly prison of the body, no man is supplied with strength sufficient to hasten in his course with due alacrity, while the greater number are so oppressed with weakness, that hesitating, and halting and even crawling on the ground, they make little progress, let every one of us go as far as his humble ability enables him, and prosecute the journey once begun. No one will travel so badly as not daily to make some degree of progress. . . . and let us not despair because of the slender measure of success. How little soever the success may correspond with our wish, our labour is not lost when today is better than yesterday, provided with true singleness of mind we keep our aim, and aspire to the goal, not speaking flattering things to ourselves, nor indulging our vices, but making it our constant endeavour to become better, until we attain to goodness itself. If during the whole course of our life we seek and follow, we shall at length attain it, when relieved from the infirmity of flesh, we are admitted to full fellowship with God.[14]

Calvin follows the chapters on eternal election and double predestination by an extensive chapter on the resurrection in which he points out, among other things, that the strength to persevere which is granted the saints is made available to them to a great extent through the resurrection:

> We even in this our earthly pilgrimage know wherein our perfect and only felicity consists, a felicity which, while we long for it, daily inflames our hearts more and more, until we attain to full fruition. Therefore I said, that none participate in the benefits of Christ save those who raise their minds to the resurrection.[15]

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[14] Ibid., p. 5.

[15] Ibid., p. 260.

Christ, the first fruit of the resurrection, was to serve to the believer as the earnest of his eternal inheritance, a symbol of the believer's promised triumph on that day when he shall be ushered into the presence of God.

> Thus, indeed, it is; the whole body of the faithful, so long as they live on the earth, must be like sheep for the slaughter, in order that they may be conformed to Christ their head. . . . Most deplorable, therefore, would their situation be did they not, by raising their mind to heaven, become superior to all that is in the world, and rise above the present aspect of affairs. . . . On the other hand, when once they have raised their head above all earthly objects, though they see the wicked flourishing in wealth and honour, and enjoying profound peace, indulging in luxury and splendour, and revelling in all kinds of delights, though they should moreover be wickedly assailed by them, suffer insult from their pride, to be robbed by their avarice or assailed by any other passion, they will have no difficulty in bearing up under these evils. They will turn their eye to that day. . . on which the Lord will receive his faithful servants, wipe away all tears from their eyes, clothe them in a robe of glory and joy; feed them with the ineffable sweetness of his pleasures, exalt them to share with him in his greatness; in fine, admit them to a participation in his happiness.[16]

And this great day, when the faithful who have borne the bitterness of the earthly pilgrimage are assembled at last before their God, is the climax of Calvin's theology. It is here that Calvin places the emphasis in his own summary of his doctrine:

> Such is the arrangement of the Institutes which may be thus summed up: Man being at first created upright, but afterwards being not partially but totally ruined, finds his entire salvation out of himself in Christ, to whom being united by the Holy Spirit freely given, without any foresight of future works, he thereby obtains a double blessing--viz. full imputation of

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[16]Ibid., p. 30.

> righteousness, which goes along with us even to the grave, and the commencement of sanctification, which daily advances till at length it is perfected in the day of regeneration or resurrection of the body, and this, in order that the great mercy of God may be celebrated in the heavenly mansions throughout eternity.[17]

It is regrettable that so few readers have persevered beyond the darkness of Calvin's doctrine of depravity into the warmth of his doctrine of the sustenance of the saints and the triumph of the resurrection. And in many respects the fate Calvin has suffered in history has been paralleled by Faulkner's fate with the critics. Few indeed have really progressed beyond Faulkner's doctrine of depravity into any basic understanding of his saints.

Dilsey is perhaps the most familiar of Faulkner's saints, unsentimentalized, and the more remarkable for the compelling sense of reality with which she confronts the reader in an age disinclined to believe in saints. Dilsey's impact upon the reader results somewhat from the position of her section at the end of The Sound and the Fury, although this by no means entirely accounts for her greatness nor explains her significance. The Sound and the Fury opens with the shock of pure experience rendered without explanation or interpretation, literally a tale told by an idiot, yet far from signifying nothing. The true significance of Benjy's tale, however, comes only after the reader has worked his way through the distortions of the story presented by Quentin and by Jason and stands with Dilsey on that dark Easter to view the final disintegration of the family.

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[17]Calvin, op. cit., II, 30.

Dilsey's section of the story is told from the viewpoint of the omniscient author, yet the reader is scarcely conscious of this, so intensely does the old Negro woman with her sunken face and purple silk dress dominate the scene. And Dilsey's Easter is significant precisely because she alone has survived the sound and the fury. It is impossible to comprehend Dilsey's judgment without knowledge of the agony, the falseness and distortion which the reader has perceived through the first three sections. If the Compsons have been defeated by time and materialism, Dilsey has not. Through the years she has been able consistently to tell time by the ruined kitchen clock. She has had money to buy Benjy a birthday cake; she has had time to toil painfully up the stairs to wait on the self-pitying mother. Now Dilsey has time for Easter and to take Benjy with her to church.

Dilsey has ever accepted Benjy as a person. She has protected him from the irresponsibility of his caretakers, loved him, sheltered him, ministered to him, dried his tears, and hushed his bellowing, "the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun."[18] And when on Easter Mrs. Compson says to Dilsey, "It's not your responsibility. You can go away. You don't have to bear the brunt of it day in and day out,"[19] all that the reader has known of Dilsey is etched with shocking suddenness against the silence in which Dilsey stands on the stairs,

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[18]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), p. 332.

[19]Ibid., p. 288.

"like a cow in the rain, as she held the empty water bottle by its neck."[20] Whether hers or not, Dilsey has accepted the responsibility the Compsons have rejected, and the reader is aware again of the endless number of times he has glimpsed Dilsey, with her monumental patience, her endurance and her selfless service. Dilsey is irritable, stubborn at times, and blessed with definite opinions of her own; she is no unbelievable paragon of virtue, yet as she walks slowly to church to celebrate the resurrection, the reader is aware of her weary body, her crippled limbs as the evidence of life lived unostensibly in service for others.

Frony protests gently when Dilsey brings Benjy to the church.

> "I wish you wouldn't keep on bringin him to church, mammy," Frony said. "Folks talkin."
> . . . "Den you send um to me," Dilsey said. "Tell um de good Lawd dont keer whether he smart or not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat."[21]

And listening to the negro preacher, his voice "a sad, timbrous quality like an alto horn . . . Dilsey sat bolt upright, her hand on Ben's knee. Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time."[22]

It is impossible to convey the quality of Dilsey's Easter service outside Faulkner's account of it. There are few passages in Faulkner's work which speak with the power of this section of The Sound and the Fury and none perhaps that exceed it. In spite of himself the reader falls under the spell of the negroid intonation of the minister's voice, the

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[20] Ibid., p. 288. [21] Ibid., p. 306 [22] Ibid., p. 311.

women's responses "without words like bubbles rising in water."[23] He is swept with Dilsey into that place where "hearts were speaking to one another . . . beyond the need for words,"[24] to feel with her under the power of that negro voice "de wailin of women de evenin lamentations; . . . de crying en de turnt-away face of God . . . de whelming flood . . . de darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations."[25] Yet Dilsey also experiences "de resurrection en de light . . . de golden horn shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead what get de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb."[26]

> In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb.[27]

Had Faulkner deliberately set about to illustrate Calvin's chapter on the power of the resurrection in the life of the saint, he could scarcely have drawn Dilsey more accurately. Here is the pilgrim who has suffered indignity and pain and poverty, yet in some completely inexplicable way been kept. Roskus, her superstitious husband, is dead. Frony does not understand. T.P. and Versh have left her. Dilsey stands alone among her own as well as among the Compsons, "crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb." This is precisely the point which Calvin makes. The tempering, toughening quality of endurance which the saint must experience is a product of his meditation

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[23] Ibid., p. 312. [24] Ibid., p. 310. [25] Ibid., p. 312.
[26] Ibid., p. 313. [27] Ibid.

and his participation in the resurrection. Dilsey understands that "dem what sees en believes shall never die,"[28] and the annealment which her life displays in the face of the dissoluation around her is rooted firmly in the blood of the remembered Lamb.

The power of the Christian symbolism of Dilsey's Easter, however, can easily be misleading. Faulkner himself served his own warning in this matter when he said, " I am not responsible for the statements of my characters. . . . I am not responsible for anything lost or found in any pages of my books."[29] And the significance of the passage lies not in what by torturous twisting it can be made to express of Faulkner's personal philosophy, but in the obvious fact, that whatever Faulkner believes personally, only the saint, who is kept in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb survives the sound and the fury and makes anything positive out of the Compson family chamber of horrors. Quentin suffered, wrongly perhaps, but suffered at any rate, intensely, as did his sister Caddy. Caddy's suffering over the abandonment of her baby reaches through to the reader even though the hard materialism of Jason. The suffering is universal--even Benjy suffers the loss of the pasture and of the sister that he loved. Yet only Dilsey has survived, and only Dilsey has transformed the suffering into any positive quality. The reason for this is not in the book, unless it lies in Dilsey's Easter,

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[28]Ibid., p. 312.

[29]Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner: The Man, the Legend, the Writer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 89.

the answer of Faulkner the artist, regardless of the theology of Faulkner the man.

Lena Grove in Light in August is one of Faulkner's lesser known saints. The intensity of the tragedy in which Joe Christmas is involved and the dramatic resolution of his search have overshadowed Lena's journey and its significance. Some attention has been given Lena in her relation to nature,[30] but Lena as a fertility goddess has far less significance than Lena as the representative of a kind of Christianity the antithesis of which is found in McEachern and Hines. Waggoner's description of Lena's sainthood merits quotation:

> She is . . . a witness to the efficacy of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and love. Her trust is in the Lord, as Armstid recognizes when he recalls how "she told Martha last night about how the Lord will see that what is right will get done." She may have been created with a passage from St. Paul in mind; at any rate she suffers long, and is kind, does not envy and is not (like Joe Christmas) too proud to accept help, is never unseemly in her conduct, and (to shift to the Revised Standard Version) "is not irritable or resentful"; she "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." ... . No wonder there is what has been called a "pastoral" quality in Lena episodes. No wonder she moves "with the untroubled unhaste of a change of season."[31]

Lena's start in life was in some respects scarcely more propitious than that of Joe Christmas. She was born into abject poverty, emotional and material, orphaned at twelve and sent to live with her brother, twenty years her senior.

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[30]See for example the study by Darl E. Zink, "The Faulkner's Garden: Women and the Immemorial Earth," Modern Fiction Studies, 2:139-149, Autumn, 1956.

[31]Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner From Jefferson to the World (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), p. 108.

> He lived in a four room and unpainted house with his labor- and childridden wife. For almost half of every year the sister-in-law was either lying in or recovering. During this time Lena did all the housework and took care of the other children. Later she told herself, 'I reckon that's why I got one so quick myself'.[32]

When Lena's pregnancy was reported by the sister-in-law, the brother, "a hard man," called her whore and accused the right man.[33] But Lena with her "unshakable. . . reserve of patient and steadfast fidelity,"[34] climbed by night through the window, and shoes in hand, thirty-five cents tied into a bandanna handkerchief, started her journey, which Faulkner described as:

> the evocation of far . . . a peaceful corridor paved with unflagging and tranquil faith and peopled with kind and nameless faces and voices . . . . [35]

Lena is like Dilsey in her perception of time. She is calm and patient; she proceeds on her journey "deliberate, unhurried and tireless,"[36] surrounded by people who, as Lena says, "have been kind. They have been right kind."[37] There is, however, a significant scene at the Armstid's between the two women:

> "Is your name Burch yet?" Mrs. Armstid says. . . with a face that might have been carved in sandstone. Then the younger one speaks. "I told you false. My name is not Burch yet. It's Lena Grove." . . . Her face is as calm as stone, but not hard. Its doggedness has a soft quality, an inwardlighted quality of tranquil and calm unreasoning and detachment.[38]

Lena in her long Bunyanesque journey accepts the truth about herself.

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[32]William Faulkner, Light in August (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1950), p. 5.

[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid., p. 6. [35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 9. [37]Ibid., p. 11. [38]Ibid., p. 16.

Her peace is not built on self deception, and her acceptance of truth is linked to a courageous faith. She insists in her "quiet, tranquil, stubborn" way that "I reckon a family ought to all be together when a chap comes. Specially the first one. I reckon the Lord will see to that."[39] And the Lord apparently does. The next morning when Mrs. Armstid violently breaks the china rooster to give Lena her egg money she says, with savage finality to her husband, "You give that to her . . . and come sunup you hitch up the team and take her away from here!"[40] Calvin pointed out that in His providence God would care for the saint even at times through use of unlikely instruments; when Martha Armstid gives Lena Grove her chicken money she parallels in a single and humorous fashion the account of the Egyptians' gift to the departing Israelites which Calvin used in arguing his point.

Lena faces some serious problems, however. Her way is not unobstructed by difficulties. She learns when she reaches Jefferson that Brown is involved with Christmas in the illegal sale of whiskey and possibly in a murder. Yet Lena shows no fear. There is only "her steady, sober gaze upon" Byron Bunch's face.[41] Although Lena receives help from Byron and from Hightower, she bears her child without medical aid among strangers, in a worthless shack. Lena knows that Brown has deserted her, yet she courageously refuses to marry Byron Bunch when he asks her,[42] and sends Lucas Burch away when she might have kept him.[43] She undertakes

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[39] Ibid., p. 18. [40] Ibid., p. 19 [41] Ibid., p. 48.

[42] Ibid., p. 362. [43] Ibid., p. 378.

the long journey back to Alabama alone. Byron Bunch decides, eventually, to accompany her but Lena has no assurance of security at the beginning of her journey except, as the furniture dealer pointed out, her belief in "folks taking good care of her".[44] After the death of Joe Christmas, the final scene of Byron and Lena is anti-climax. But the anti-climax itself is significant. The saint in Faulkner's work is never the tortured hero. The saint is the negro servant Dilsey, and now an ignorant country girl in search of a husband and a name for her child. "You see your calling brethern," Paul wrote, "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Byron Bunch shares Lena's spiritual journey, but before he does he learns the vital lesson he expresses to Hightower:

> I mind how I said to you once that there is a price for being good the same as for being bad; a cost to pay. And it's the good men that cant deny the bill when it comes around.[45]

Byron's journey does not cover as many miles as does Lena's, but it is an important one as Byron moves from those quiet Saturday afternoons alone at the planing mill to the day when, "hangdog and determined and calm too," he takes responsibility for the child and Lena because he loves them, not because it is a part of the high code of Christian responsibility to which he had adhered. Unlike McEachern and Hines,

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[44] Ibid., p. 444. [45] Ibid., p. 341.

Byron Bunch gives no suggestion of hypocrisy in his Christianity. His service to the country church is sincere, and his friendship with Hightower and Christmas a genuine expression of love. Yet Byron is uncommitted and the lesson he must learn revolves around this. He thinks at last, "It seems like a man can just about bear anything. He can even bear what he never done,"[46] but by the time he thinks this the experiences which he has suffered have changed him irrevocably; he can never go back to the aloneness of the planing mill again. He thinks "people who passed and looked at him could see no change. . . [yet] he had done what he had done and felt what he had felt."[47] Because of this he thinks, "Yes. I'll have to be moving. I'll have to get on so I can find me something else to meddle with."[48] Byron has succeeded in learning the necessity of transforming his cloistered faith into vital contact with the world and as he does so he shares with Lena in their pilgrimage the same sense of providential protection and the strength to persevere.

Hightower's life had been lived "among phantoms, and side by side with a ghost."[49] He had used his faith as the vehicle through which he might live in a romanticized past; he had secured, through terrible payment, freedom from involvement in life. When Byron comes to tell him of Lena, Hightower thinks, "I am not in life any more,"[50] and when threatened with involvement he thinks, "I wont. I wont. I have

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[46]Ibid., p. 371. [47]Ibid., p. 366. [48]Ibid., p. 385.

[49]Ibid., p. 415. [50]Ibid., p. 263.

bought immunity."[51] Yet Byron Bunch's steadily increasing involvement involves Hightower also, in an awareness of himself,[52] in the birth of Lena's child,[53] and in life itself which Hightower thinks once of Byron having restored to him.[54] But the life restored to Hightower exacts a terrible payment, the effort to protect Joe Christmas from the enraged Percy Grimm at the cost of whatever pride Hightower might have had left.

Hightower in his distance from life can see somewhat objectively the terrible excesses of Calvinism represented by McEachern, Hines and Percy Grimm and it is through Hightower that Faulkner delivers his terrible condemnation of Southern Protestantism which asks:

> for not love, not life, forbidding it to others, demanding in sonorous tones death as though death were the boon. . . . Pleasure, ecstasy, they cannot seem to bear: their escape from it is in violence, in drinking and fighting and praying; . . . why should not their religion drive them to crucifixion of themselves and one another?[55]

Thinking of the impending doom of Joe Christmas:

> 'And they will do it gladly', he says, in the dark window. He feels his mouth and jaw muscles tauten with something premonitory, something more terrible than laughing even, 'Since to pity him would be to admit selfdoubt and to hope for and need pity themselves. They will do it gladly, gladly. That's why it is so terrible. . . .'[56]

Hightower is just in his condemnation of the terrible fanaticism of McEachern, Hines and Grimm which has led to the "glad" crucifixion of a

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[51] Ibid., p. 271. [52] Ibid., p. 342. [53] Ibid., p. 353.
[54] Ibid., p. 363. [55] Ibid., p. 322. [56] Ibid.

man. Yet the brunt of Hightower's criticism lies not upon the religion per se as it would appear in the comments of those critics who do not cite the complete passage. It lies rather upon the unwillingness of men to acknowledge their own selfdoubt and need of pity. It is not the religion which Hightower criticizes--it is the perversion of it by men who cannot bear to face their own guilt. Faulkner makes this abundantly clear in the soliloquy of Hightower just before his death. The lesson of the need for pity and selfdoubt, for mercy and forgiveness, was one that Hightower had had to learn.

Before he dies Hightower acknowledges his misuse of life and of the past, and his own use of religion "to forward my own desire."[57] He acknowledges that he has been more than a victim: "After all, there must be some things for which God cannot be accused by man and held responsible."[58] He acknowledges the charge of "the final and supreme Face Itself" that he was responsible for his wife's death: "You took her as a means toward your own selfishness. As an instrument to be called to Jefferson; not for My end, but for your own."[59] And he who had thought so often of peace, who had attempted at such cost to purchase peace as freedom from involvement thinks in death of "that peace in which to sin and be forgiven which is the life of man."[60]

And having gained self-knowledge at last, Hightower completes his criticism of the church:

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[57] Ibid., p. 427.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., p. 428.

[60] Ibid., p. 427.

nearer him than me to convince of that."[64] And if Lena and Byron are "kept in the faith" Hightower is drawn slowly, irresistibly, by that "something nearer" into the faith which they share.

Cash Bundren in As I Lay Dying is another of Faulkner's great "good" characters, whose significance has been overlooked. Cash is the committed man when the novel opens, and the progress of the novel reveals the extent of his committment, his patience, his endurance, his selflessness. It is this quality of selflessness and willingness to endure which so enrages Doc Peabody, the scientific man, as he attempts to reset Cash's broken leg set by the Bundrens in raw cement. The scene between Cash and Peabody is recounted from the angry Peabody's point of view:

> "They just aimed to ease hit some," he said.
> "Aimed, hell," I said. "What in hell did Armstid mean by letting them put you on that wagon again?"
> "Hit was gittin' right noticeable," he said. "We never had time to wait." I just looked at him. "Hit never bothered me none," he said.
> "Don't you lie there and try to tell me you rode six days on a wagon without strings, with a broken leg and it never bothered you. . . . Concrete. . . God Almighty. . . ."[65]

For all his service to humanity, Peabody can neither understand such a committal nor the endurance of such pain.

Cash is the careful workman. He loves his tools and the wood which he handles, and has a quiet pride which despises a shoddy piece of work. Yet Cash, for all his practical bent is the idealist: Darl records this as he and Cash discuss Jewel:

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[64] Ibid., p. 342.

[65] William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1946), pp. 515, 516.

> It seems to him that he has seen it all the while: that that which is destroying the Church is not the outward groping of those within it nor the inward groping for those without, but the professionals who control it and who have removed the bells from its steeples. He seems to see them, endless, without order, empty, symbolical bleak, sky-pointed not with ecstasy or passion but in adjuration, threat, and doom.
> . . . 'And I accepted that,' he thinks. 'I acquiesced. Nay, I did worse: I served it. I served it by using it to forward my own desire.'[61]

Faulkner is in a deeper sense most Christian and perhaps most Calvinistic where he would appear to be most anti-Christian. He insists upon the common guilt of humanity, but he also speaks through Hightower of "that peace which is the promise and the end of the Church."[62] Hightower's death is preceded not by a ringing denunciation of the church, but by his terrible acknowledgement of the trust of the ministry which he had betrayed:

> I came here where faces full of bafflement and hunger and eagerness waited for me, waiting to believe; I did not see them. Where hands were raised for what they believed that I would bring them; I did not see them.[63]

Here is no rejection of an institution, nor a ministry, but a bitter criticism of the use to which men have put them.

Hightower at the end of Light in August is potentially a redemptive character. If to some extent he has shared in the sin of McEachern, Hines and Grimm, he has experienced an awakening and something near to repentance in a way which in itself is something like the irresistibility of grace. Byron thinks once, watching Hightower's struggle with himself, "It aint me he is shouting at. It's like he knows there is something

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[61] Ibid. [62] Ibid., p. 321. [63] Ibid., p. 427.

> "It aint the best things, the things that are good for him. . . . A young boy. A fellow kind of hates to see . . . wallowing in somebody else's mire. . . ." That's what he was trying to say. When something is new and hard and bright, there ought to be something a little better for it than just being safe, since the safe things are just the things that folks have been doing so long they have worn the edges off and there's nothing to doing them that leaves a man to say, That was not done before and it cannot be done again.[66]

Though Cash was rejected by his mother, he seemed to understand her dreadful need, and ministered most directly to her in her dying as he made her casket, the best that could be made. It was to Cash that Addie spoke last. Cash understands Darl, also, and when Darl is brutally dragged off to the asylum at Jefferson, it is Cash who comforts him: "Down there it'll be quiet, with none of the bothering and such. It'll be better for you, Darl,"[67] he said. Remembering later, Cash thought of Darl: "But it is better so for him. This world is not his world; this life his life."[68]

And it is Cash who enunciates what is perhaps the ultimate judgment concerning Darl which the author wishes the reader to make:

> But I ain't so sho that ere a man has the right to say what is crazy and what ain't. It's like there was a fellow in every man that's done a-past the sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and the insane doings of that man with the same horror and the same astonishment.[69]

Cash feels a kinship to his family and a compassion for them which sets him apart from the family as though he possessed some inner resource which they lacked. He comes with the family through the water and the

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[66] Ibid., p. 431.

[67] Ibid., p. 514.

[68] Ibid., p. 532.

[69] Ibid., p. 515.

fire, but of the family it is Cash who suffers most as the result of the ordeal. The Christian symbolism in the scene in which the family must go through the flood to carry Abbie's body to Jefferson, has unusual strength in reference to Cash. It is Cash who takes the responsibility; he takes "the reins and lowers the team carefully and skillfully into the stream."[70] And it is Cash whose body is broken when "the log . . . surged up out of the water and stood for an instant upright upon that surging and heaving desolation like Christ."[71] There seems to be some symbolic sense in which the compassion which flows from Cash is related to his having been broken upon that Christ who had, in turn, said, "This is my body broken for you." And Cash, like Dilsey, seems able to transform suffering into some positive quality. Because of this he, again like Dilsey, has the last word--his compassion for pa ("Let him take his time. . . He ain't spry as you remember."[72]); his acceptance of the new Mrs. Bundren (but I said leave him be: I wouldn't mind hearing a little more of that music myself[73]); his acceptance of the demands made upon him, though he thinks wistfully on the winter nights of the peace which Darl now enjoys.[74] Cash is another of "the least of these my brethern," whose simple sainthood demonstrates something very like the power of the Calvinist's God who sustained the earthly pilgrim as ultimate triumph.

Ike McCaslin in Go Down Moses, is, like Cash, a carpenter; he is the McCaslin "elected, chosen," as both he and his cousin expressed it,

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[70] Ibid., p. 444. [71] Ibid., p. 445.

[72] Ibid. [73] Ibid. [74] Ibid., p. 532.

to expiate the sins of slavery of his family. It is worth noting, however, that Faulkner does not seem to express complete approval of McCaslin's renunciation of his patrimony, as some critics infer. The renunciation is linked with McCaslin's childlessness[75] and with the "spoiling" of his grand-nephew, Roth Edmonds. The girl whom Roth had deserted told Ike, "You spoiled him. . . when you gave to his grandfather that land which didn't belong to him, not even half of it by will or even law."[76] But McCaslin, too, is "kept," and seems to experience the compassion and the ability to transform suffering which have marked other of Faulkner's saints.

Because of the character of his mission, and Faulkner's avowed intention in presenting him, the Corporal of The Fable must be included in Faulkner's list of saints. The Corporal, however, is one of Faulkner's least successful characters, and, in his passivity, certainly the least attractive of Faulkner's saints. Waggoner says:

> The supposedly Christlike corporal does not suggest the historic Jesus to me in the least. Not only is he a dim and shadowy figure about whom we know too little as a person and about whose expressly symbolic activities we know too much, he appears to be a young man without radiance or magnetism or eloquence or even, so far as we can really know, vision. Granted that in reading the Bible every man has a right to be his own interpreter, surely we may agree that the weight of history throws the bruden of proof on anyone who would envision Jesus in so negative and colorless a way. . . . The corporal not only would not have been recognized as a type

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[75]William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (Modern Library Edition; New York: Random House, 1942), p. 314.

[76]Ibid., p. 360.

> of Christ by Dante or Milton or Donne; he would not have been recognized by Matthew Arnold or Renan.[77]

Although the Corporal does go to his death ostensibly for the cause of peace among men, the reader who has followed sympathetically through the years Faulkner's insistance upon involvement as the price of true living, and the suffering triumph of his few saints, is sharply disappointed by the passivity and remoteness of the shadowy corporal. The Corporal would have been worse than useless to Dilsey, to Cash Bundren, to Lena Grove. And what is even more significant, it is difficult to think of even Hightower, who learned reluctantly to suffer willingly the price of his involvement with mankind, as having any respect for the Corporal or anything in common with him.

Faulkner's characters seem to fall into three broad groups. There are, at the one extreme, the Snopes, Jason Compson, and Popeye, and like characters, whose evil seems almost mechanical in its complete lack of self-consciousness and sense of guilt. The large middle group are those characters who, like Joe Christmas, Quentin Compson, Cadance Compson, Addie Bundren, Temple Drake and Gavin Stephens among others, seem intensely aware of guilt, yet strangely powerless to deal with it in their lives. The third and smallest group are Faulkner's saints, among whom are Dilsey, Lena Grove, Byron Bunch, Ike McCaslin, Cash Bundren and the Corporal, perhaps, who in some mysterious fashion are enabled to exemplify again the old virtues of pride, honor, honesty, endurance, and faith. But the most

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[77]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 229.

startling thing is the relationships between these groups. The dramatic tension in Faulkner's novels does not result from the struggle of a Snopes to become first a member of Group II and so aware of guilt, then a Dilsey and a member of Group III, able in some fashion to deal with guilt and transform their lives through acceptance of suffering. Nor is the tragedy of Faulkner's novels ever the regression of a Dilsey to Snopesism. The intense reality of Faulkner's characters has prevented ready recognition of the broad types in which he works, and the inability of a character, once typed, to change basically the pattern in which he works out his destiny. Once a Snopes, always a Snopes. Once a Joe Christmas, or a Quentin Compson, always a wanderer, an Ahab; but once a Dilsey or a Lena Grove, kept, sustained and victorious, in spite of all difficulties, all suffering, all tears. In no case has Faulkner successfully moved a character from one group into another. The story of Temple Drake in Sanctuary and Requiem for a Nun is his most obvious attempt to do so, and points up the fundamental problem which has ominous overtones for Faulkner's future work.

Temple Drake in Sanctuary is a thoroughly detestable character. She shows up at a distinct disadvantage when compared to Ruby Lamar, Lee Godwin's companion (although Faulkner always sentimentalizes prostitutes much in the Brete Harte tradition), and Faulkner's presentation of her nymphomania is his satire of the effects at titillation of much modern writing, and his own expression of the despair and revulsion of meaningless lives. Sanctuary closes with Temple sitting in the Luxembourg Gardens, yawning and powdering her nose. In Requiem for a Nun

Temple Drake Stevens finds it necessary to confess her whole sordid past to the Governor, and to her husband, in order to accept the redemption offered her through the death of Nancy, the negro maid who had strangled Temple's baby, but whose actions were the result of Temple's own guilt.[78] Temple finds it also necessary to go to the jail where Nancy is awaiting execution and confess to her. Temple, trying to explain the necessity of the agonizing process to Nancy says, "You know: not to save you, that wasn't really concerned in it: but just for me, just for the suffering and the paying. . . ."[79] But Nancy understands far better than Temple the redemptive process. When Gavin Stevens asks Nancy, "The salvation of the world is in man's suffering. Is that it?"[80] Nancy's answer seems a rather serious effort to answer the question:

> "Yes, sir. . . He don't want you to suffer. He don't like suffering neither. But He can't help Himself. . . . You ain't got to /sin/ You can't help it. And he knows that too. He don't tell you not to sin, He just asks you not to. And He don't tell you to suffer. But He gives you the chance. He gives you the best He can think of, that you are capable of doing. And He will save you."[81]

Temple in an agonized awareness of her own need asks Nancy, "What about me? Even if there is one /heaven/ and somebody waiting in it to forgive me, there's still tomorrow and tomorrow."[82] Nancy answers briefly, "Believe." "Believe what?" Temple questions, but Nancy can only answer,

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[78]William Faulkner, Requiem For a Nun (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 210.

[79]Ibid., p. 275.

[80]Ibid., p. 276.

[81]Ibid., pp. 276, 278.

[82]Ibid., p. 283.

"Believe."[83] A closer examination reveals that Nancy's faith is Dilsey's old orthodoxy--Christ the Lord and Savior, and a simple justification by faith through grace. But Temple cannot believe. Although she is, at the end of the novel, like Hightower, a potentially redemptive figure, she is still not sure that God, if he exists, would take the trouble to save her. Temple's question remains: "What kind of God is it that has to blackmail His customers with the whole world's grief and ruin?"[84]

And Temple's question is essentially Faulkner's, and, in effect, unresolved. What Temple needs is, so to speak, an ample portion of irresistible grace to incline her depraved will to believe. Faulkner has so painted Temple Drake in an orthodox fashion that it is difficult to find other than an orthodox answer to her need. Yet orthodoxy is not possible; Faulkner the artist is not completely sure that The Player, The Dark Diceman, They, Them, or The Old Master, is the God of mercy who unites the soul to Christ through the Holy Spirit freely given, as Calvin phrased it.[85]

Much has been made of the humanism which appeared in Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech. He said:

> It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure. . . . I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal. . . because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's voice . . . can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.[86]

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[83]Ibid. [84]Ibid., p. 276. [85]Calvin, op. cit., I, 30.

[86]William Faulkner, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech," as printed in Mary Cooper Robb, William Faulkner: An Estimate of His Contribution to the Modern American Novel (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1957), p. 1.

This speech is repeated in essence in The Fable, as though Faulkner wished in these matters to make sure that his point received sufficient emphasis.[87] Yet having said this, Faulkner has neither enlightened the reader nor given himself a firm basis from which to work as The Fable itself demonstrates, and The Mansion further proves. Man's endurance is not the essence of his immortality Faulkner has said. It is his soul, the spirit that is capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance, terms of the old virtues, that makes man immortal, and it is the poet's task to help man in these matters. But what Faulkner has not faced in his work, nor in his philosophy is his basic ambivalence about his own Christian bias, his uneasy relationship with his Christian background as Waggoner has phrased it.[88] If all men are capable of the old virtues potentially, Faulkner portrays only those characters like Dilsey, Cash Bundren and Lena Grove, who have in practice a faith which is near orthodoxy as displaying those virtues. Men, as Faulkner portrays them, do have what he called in The Fable "that old primordial fault";[89] depravity is real. And if man does have that "old primordial fault" does it not require more than an ambiguous humanism to make him capable of endurance in terms of the old virtues? Faulkner does not face this question in his work. He is in essence like Temple Drake. His view of man is so orthodox that only the orthodox solution to man's dilemma will fit;

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[87]William Faulkner, The Fable (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 354.

[88]Waggoner, op. cit., p. vi.

[89]Faulkner, op. cit., p. 354.

yet in a strange way Faulkner as well as the majority of his characters, finds it impossible to believe.

Faulkner cannot solve his dilemma for modern man. Mink Snopes started out in The Town as "mean. He was the only out-and-out mean Snopes we ever experienced. . . just mean without no profit consideration or hope at all."[90] He ambushed Jack Huston because Huston, in resentment of Mink's Snopesism, had charged Mink for keeping his cow up over the winter. Flem Snopes had refused to come to Mink's rescue and Mink, "slight and frail and harmless-looking as a child and as deadly as a small viper--a half-grown asp or cobra or krait" spent thirty-eight years in Parchman, the penitentary, kept alive by his unshakable resolve to kill Flem Snopes who, Mink felt, had betrayed him. Yet at the end of The Mansion the reader is presented with Mink Snopes, having successfully murdered Flem, snuggling down against mother earth,

> himself among them, equal to any, good as any, brave as any, being inextricable from, anonymous with all of them: the beautiful, the splendid, the proud and the brave, right on up to the top itself among the shining phantoms and dreams which are the milestones of the long human recording--Helen and the bishops, the kind and the unhomed angels, the scornful and graceless seraphim.[91]

Faulkner is a great writer but to place Mink Snopes among the "kind and unhomed angels and the scornful and graceless seraphims" requires more than Faulkner provides. Through what metamorphosis is the reader to

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[90]William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 79.

[91]William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 426.

understand that the meanest Snopes has become equal to "the splendid, the proud and the brave"? By ambushing one man, then living out thirty-three years in a penitentiary, sustained by a pure and furious outrage which succeeded in expressing itself by the murder of the cousin who had refused to circumvent the just processes of law? No adequate answer is in the book. Faulkner's saints are warm and convincing people. His depraved characters are terrifying in their depravity, but Faulkner does not successfully transform one to the other. To say that Mink Snopes is as good as any man, is, even from Faulkner's pen, nonsense, and an abnegation of Dilsey's endurance and Lena Grove's faith which does not make sense.

The Mansion presents the same problem in the character of Flem Snopes. Flem, who was the epitomy of evil in The Hamlet and The Town, now invites the reader's sympathy as Flem plays "give me lief," as Ratliff explains it, with fate.[92] When Ratliff, who had chronicled the Snopes saga in The Hamlet and The Town, says, in The Mansion, of Flem, "The pore son of a bitch,"[93] the reader has a right to demand that Faulkner present some strong reason for Ratliff's sympathy. If Faulkner means to say that Flem was the victim of his own materialism, then the reader is still confused. Was not Flem Snopes responsible for what he had done to the hamlet and the town? The Aristoteliam principle applies in part; it is impossible to feel "the pore son of a bitch" for the man who as the personification of materialism has cheated, robbed and wilfully defrauded every person in Yoknapatawph County whom he could. Faulkner says in his

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[92]Ibid., p. 430. [93]Ibid.

short preface to The Mansion that he thinks that any contradiction and discrepancies in the book are due to the fact that "the author has learned, he believes, more about the human heart and its dilemma than he knew thirty-four years ago. . . ."[94] Unfortunately, The Mansion does not bear out the author's hopes. Faulkner may express more overtly his compassion for humanity, but he presents no answers to men's problems.

Ratliff says in The Mansion that "Man aint really evil, he just aint got any sense,"[95] but to take Ratliff seriously is to entertain complete confusion or worse. To say that all Joe Christmas and Quentin Compson lacked was common sense is to make a travesty of tragedy. And to make of Temple Drake a problem in common sense is to reduce Requiem for a Nun to complete incomprehensibility. Was common sense all that Flem Snopes lacked? If so, materialism is reduced to mere ignorance. Nothing in Faulkner's works has prepared the reader to believe that it is common sense which man needs to prevail, to assert the old values of "courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past."[96]

Randall Stewart has pointed out that the word prevail as used in Faulkner's Stockholm speech carries with it the Scriptural connotation

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[94] Ibid., p. 1.

[95] Ibid., p. 230.

[96] William Faulkner, "Nobel Prize Accertance Speech," as printed in Mary Cooper Robb, William Faulkner: An Estimate of His Contribution to the Modern American Novel (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1957), p. 1.

of victory won with God's help.[97] Faulkner's ambiguous use of the term, however, gives reason for caution. Is it man's own toughness and endurance which enables him to prevail, essentially the humanistic answer to man's dilemma? Some of Faulkner's public announcements would tend to assert that this is so, yet the works of the artist stand in flat contradiction to this. Those of Faulkner's characters who do prevail demonstrate something nearer the supernatural perseverance of the saints than a revivified humanism.

It is impossible in attempting to assess Faulkner's theology to recall the mental and emotional climate in which his early work appeared. In an era committed to a view of man as a victim and product of his environment, Faulkner asserted again the great truths of the human condition--the realities of evil and guilt, and the inescapable responsibility of human will. Since Faulkner first asserted these truths, however, a second world war and subsequent overwhelming world tensions have so fundamentally altered world opinion that the age in which Faulkner now writes is characterized to some extent by its interest in Kierkegaard, existentialism, and Barthian theology. Faulkner has asserted the responsibility of the poet, if we are to take the Stockholm speech seriously,

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[97]Randal Stewart, "Hawthorne and Faulkner," College English, 17:258-262, February, 1956. Stewart also makes a strong case for Faulkner's orthodoxy in his book, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), but Faulkner's concern with original sin, which Stewart discusses at length, is not adequate ground to assert without qualification, as Stewart does, that Faulkner is "one of the most profoundly Christian writers of our time" (p.142). The doctrine of depravity without an atonement or with as ambiguous an atonement as Faulkner provides, necessitates a more cautious application of the term Christian if used in any historic sense of the word.

yet, in a sense, having reasserted some of the fundamental truths concerning human nature, Faulkner has failed to face up to the implications of his early work, to deal honestly with the issues which these novels raised. In the decades which have followed the appearance of Faulkner's major works, men such as Barth, Tillich, Neibuhr, Camus and Sartre have come, to greater or lesser degrees, to many conclusions similar to those of Faulkner concerning the nature of man; yet in a way unmatched by Faulkner, these men have attempted to go on to present some solution to the human dilemma. It is only necessary to lay The Mansion by The Sound and the Fury to demonstrate, regrettably, the disintegration of a great talent, or compare the tepid sentamentalism which creeps into The Mansion with the intensity of a play by Satre, to feel the incalculable loss suffered by American literature in Faulkner's failure to meet more adequately the questions facing modern man. Faulkner is not a philosopher, and it is neither sensible nor desirable to expect his work to display a highly developed theology; but it is impossible not to regret that in his latest novel the creator of Dilsey offers no more to modern man than the spectacle of Gavin Stephens sopping up his tears with Ratliff's freshly laundered handkerchief.

Faulkner's early works show several strong parallels to Calvinism, in the doctrine of the depravity of man, predestination, and the perseverance of the saints. In terms of great polarities parallel to those of Calvinism, Faulkner discusses the issues of man's nature, his guilt and glory, his will, bound, yet free, and his fate, predestined, yet his freely to command. There does not seem to be any clear indication of

an atonement in Faulkner's novels; although some characters demonstrate characteristics of Christian sainthood, Faulkner does not make clear the source of the strength which enables his saints to prevail. There would seem to be an ambiguous relationship between Faulkner's humanism and the parallels to Calvinism which occur in his major works.

Faulkner has recently said that "No one is without Christianity if we agree on what we mean by the word."[98] He then defined it as:

> every individual's individual code of behavior by means of which he makes himself a better human being than his nature wants to be, if he followed his nature only. Whatever its symbol--cross or crescent or whatever--that symbol is man's reminder of his duty inside the human race.[99]

Whether, as Waggoner suggests, Faulkner was either "pulling the interviewer's leg. . . /or/ talking through his hat,"[100] whatever he sought to define is far from Nancy's "Just believe," or Dilsey's Easter. Cranly remarked to Stephen Dedalus in Portrait of the Artist as a Young man, "It is a curious thing . . . how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve."[101] This may to some extent be said of Faulkner, since it is not primarily within his humanism but within the dramatic polaritites parallel to those of Calvinism that the strength of Faulkner's novels lies.

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[98]William Faulkner in the Paris Interviews as cited in Waggoner, op. cit., p. 242.

[99]Ibid., p. 243.

[100]Ibid.

[101]James Joyce, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking Press, 1944), p. 240.

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